NATION

Kerala sees 4th brain eating ameoba case

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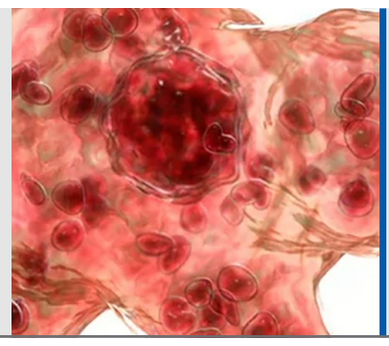

BUSINESS

Gujarat leads with $7.3B FDI, sees 55% rise in FY24

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Helped captain deliver his vision, says Rahul Dravid

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NEET counselling postponed amid row

The process may begin by 3rd week of July

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Union Health Ministry on Saturday clarified that the counselling schedule for NEET UG and PG courses for the year 2024 has not yet been notified by the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC).

The NEET UG all-India quota (AIQ) seat counselling was scheduled to start on 6 July. The update comes after the Supreme Court refused to delay the NEET UG counselling which was scheduled to begin today.

The counselling schedule for NEET UG and PG is announced by MCC, under the Directorate General of Health Services, on its website on the basis of the completion of the exam process and the finalisation of the seat matrix by the National Medical Commission (NMC).

For the year 2024, NMC has communicated its schedule for finalisation of the seat matrix for UG and PG seats in the last week of June indicating that it will finalise the UG seat matrix by the third week of July and PG seat matrix by mid-August.

The MCC will accordingly notify the counselling schedule.

Members of different student organisations protest over the alleged rigging of the NEET UG exam, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Amid growing clamour for cancellation of the controversy-ridden National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG), 2024, over alleged malpractice, the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) told the Supreme Court on Friday that scrapping it without any proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality would be counter-productive as it could "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates.

The NTA, which conducts NEET-UG for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, and the Union education ministry have been at the centre of the row over alleged large-scale malpractice - ranging from question paper leaks to impersonation - in the test held on 5 May.

—PTI

SURAT BUILDING COLLAPSE

A person was killed and three to four others were feared trapped under the debris as a six-storey residential building collapsed in Gujarat's Surat on Saturday. While a woman was rescued soon after the collapse, the body of a man was pulled out later **PHOTO: PTI**

Hathras stampede: Cops probe political links of Bhole Baba

NOIDA, 6 JULY

- Two more suspects Ramprakash Shakya, 61, and Sanju Yadav, 33, were held in Hathras in connection with the stampede that left 121 people dead.

Devprakash Madhukar, the main accused in 2 July Hathras satsang stampede, was arrested from Delhi by Uttar Pradesh Police.

The police claimed he was recently contacted by some political parties and suspected that self-styled godman Bhole Baba's events were "funded" by a political party.

Madhukar was sent to 14-day judicial custody by a magistrate court, officials said.

Two more suspects Ramprakash Shakya, 61, and Sanju Yadav, 33, were held in Hathras in connection with the stampede that left 121 people dead, according to the police. Madhukar, 42, was arrested late Friday from Delhi's Najafgarh area by a Special Operations Group of Hathras police, Hathras Superintendent of Police Nipun Agarwal said.

The officer said Madhukar worked as a fundraiser for events of self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba and collected donations. The police will apply for remand of Madhukar, he said.

"His financial transactions and money trails are being looked into, and call detail records are also being checked," Agarwal added.

"Madhukar was the main organiser of the satsang programme in Fulrai village on 2 July and the permission for this programme was taken by him. Thus, two roles of Madhukar have come to light -- the main organiser and fundraiser," he added.

"No person was allowed to do videography or photography at the venue. Thus, the arrangements were not done properly and the traffic system etc was affected by violating many conditions mentioned in the permission letter issued by the administration," the SP said. The police's statement on Saturday about the SOG contradicts Madhukar's lawyer's claim that he had surrendered before police.

—PTI

Prime accused of the Hathras stampede case Devprakash Madhukar was arrested in Delhi on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

MODI, STARMER AGREE TO EXPEDITE INDIA-UK FTA

LONDON, 6 JULY

Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday morning and said he stood ready to conclude a Free Trade Agreement that worked for both sides.

India and the UK have been negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) for over two years with a Conservative Party-led government but the talks were stalled in the 14th round amidst the general election cycles in both countries.

It is now expected to be picked up by the new Starmer-led Labour government, which was voted in with a landslide this week.

"The Prime Minister [Starmer] said he looked forward to further deepening the strong and respectful relationship between both countries, and welcomed Prime Minister Modi's leadership on key global challenges, such as climate change and economic growth," the spokesperson noted.

The leaders are then said to have discussed the importance of the "living bridge" between both countries, and the 2030 Roadmap and are said to have agreed that there was a wide range of areas across defence and security, critical and emerging technology, and climate change, for the two countries to deepen cooperation on.

The Labour Party's election manifesto for Thursday's polls committed to clinching the deal. *—PTI*

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4 terrorists killed in Kulgam; solider dies in encounter

SRINAGAR, 6 JULY

At least four terrorists were killed and a soldier laid down his life in twin encounters in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, officials said. They said contact with terrorists was established during a cordon and search operation in the Frisal Chinnigam area of Kulgam. In the exchange of fire there so far, four terrorists have been killed, the officials said, adding their bodies have been sighted.

Drone footage of the encounter site has shown four bodies lying there, but they could not be retrieved yet as firing was still going on, the officials said. The operation is on, the officials added. Some bodies of terrorists have been sighted, but the encounter has not concluded yet. *—PTI*

Rajasthan teen kidnapped, gangraped in car

JAIPUR, 6 JULY

A 17-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped and gang-raped by two men in a moving car in Rajasthan's Sirohi district, police said on Saturday. The police identified the accused as Vanna Ram and Dashrath, they said. The incident occurred on Wednesday night when the accused kidnapped the girl from her residence and gang-raped her in a moving car. They dropped her back to her home after committing the crime, police said. Based on the victim's family's complaint, a case was registered under the POCSO against the accused. *—PTI*

Ronaldo ends Euro league career without a goal

HAMBURG, 6 JULY

France beat Portugal 5-3 in a penalty shootout to reach the European Championship semifinals on Friday, ending Ronaldo's bid to win the title in his last appearance at the tournament. The Portugal superstar, who is 39, who was playing his record sixth Euros had confirmed that year's European Championship will be the last of his career. But this time, they weren't Ronaldo's tears. Instead, the Portugal superstar's role was to console a weeping teammate after a painful exit from their last European Championship — and, who knows, potentially their final major international tournament.

Pepe was dejected as he sobbed on the shoulder of Ronaldo Portugal's penalty-shootout loss. *—PTI*

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Reformist Pezeshkian elected Iran President

DUBAI, 6 JULY

Reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian won Iran's runoff Presidential election on Saturday, besting hard-liner Saeed Jalili by promising to reach out to the West and ease enforcement on the country's mandatory headscarf law after years of sanctions and protests squeezing the Islamic Republic.

Pezeshkian promised no radical changes to Iran's Shiite theocracy in his campaign and long has held Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the final arbiter of all matters of state in the country. But even Pezeshkian's modest aims will be challenged by an Iranian government still largely held by hard-liners, the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, and Western fears over Tehran enriching uranium to near-weapons-grade levels.

"Dear people of Iran, the elections are over and this is just the beginning of our cooperation," Pezeshkian wrote on X, which is still banned in Iran. "The difficult path ahead will not be smooth except with your companionship, empathy and trust. I extend my hand to you and I swear on my honor that I will not leave you alone on this path." A vote count offered by authorities put Pezeshkian as the winner with 16.3 million votes to Jalili's 13.5 million in Friday's election. *—PTI*

Masoud Pezeshkian **PHOTO: X/@DRPEZESHKIAN**

> **Congratulations @drpezeshkian on your election as the President of Iran. Looking forward to working closely with you to further strengthen bilateral ties for the benefit of our peoples and the region**
> -Narendra Modi, PM

>>>More on Page 6

13 KILLED IN A DAY AS HEAVY RAINS BATTER UP

LUCKNOW, 6 JULY

Thirteen people were killed in rain-related incidents across the state in the last 24 hours, Uttar Pradesh's relief department officials said on Saturday.

According to the relief department, from 6:30 pm on Friday to 6:30 pm on Saturday, two people were killed in Fatehpur after being hit by lightning, while one person died of drowning.

In Raebareli district, one person died after being hit by lightning and another died in a rain-related incident. Uttar Pradesh recorded an average of 18.3 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours. Of the 75 districts, 45 recorded excess rainfall in the last 24 hours, as per the relief department. Shrawasti district recorded maximum rainfall of 65.5 mm.

The relief department has also alerted local administration in districts bordering Nepal. *—PTI*

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1st Budget of Modi 3.0 set to be on 23 July

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Parliament's Budget Session will be held between 22 July and 12 August, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Saturday. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the budget on 23 July. Rijiju said, "Hon'ble President of India, on the recommendation of Government of India, has approved the proposal for summoning of both the Houses of Parliament for the Budget Session, 2024 from 22 July to 12 August."

This will be the first budget presented by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in its third term amid high anticipation following President Droupadi Murmu's assertion that it will be marked by many historic steps. *—PTI*

SHOW OF SUPPORT

RaGa meets kin of Rajkot, Morbi victims

AHMEDABAD, 6 JULY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday met the family members of those who lost their lives in various tragedies in Gujarat in recent years, and promised to raise their grievances in Parliament.

Relatives of the victims of TRP game zone fire in Rajkot, a boat capsizing incident in Vadodara, the Morbi bridge collapse of 2022 and the 2016 Una Dalit flogging case met the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha at Gujarat Congress headquarters in Paldi area.

"Rahul Gandhi interacted with the family members of victims, understood their issues, and promised that he will raise them in Parliament so that justice is done," said Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani who coordinated the interaction.

Narendra Parmar, who lost his ten-year-old daughter in the Morbi bridge collapse, said they have lost faith in the "corrupt system" in BJP-ruled Gujarat. 135 people died after a British-era suspension bridge, Machchhu River in Morbi town collapsed on 30 October, 2022. Sandhya Nizama, who lost her nin-year-old son in a boat capsize incident in Vadodara, alleged justice was not done because the many culprits were let off by the police.

Twelve school students and two teachers were killed when a boat capsized in Motnath lake in Harni area of Vadodara city on 18 January. As many as 27 persons including four children were killed in the massive fire that swept through the game zone in Nana-Mava locality of Rajkot city on 25 May. Rahul will visit Manipur on Monday and meet the violence-affected people in different districts of the state. *—PTI*

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi during a meeting with party workers, at PCC office, Congress Bhawan, in Ahmedabad, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

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11-year-old boy succumbs to Dengue in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

PHOTO: SALAR

An 11-year-old boy has succumbed to Dengue fever at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Saturday. Gagan, a resident of Anjanapura on the outskirts of Bengaluru, has been under treatment for dengue fever for the past few days.

When contacted by **Salar News,** one of the Chief Health Officers (CHO) of BBMP was unaware of the death that happened in the City on Saturday and the other CHO did not respond to calls. The number of positive cases has crossed 2,000 this week in the City and 1 lakh in the State. The death toll in the State went up to six. Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao urged the citizens of Bengaluru to join hands with Health Department in controlling dengue. With the surge in dengue cases in Bengaluru, BJP MP CN Manjunath urged Congress-led State government to declare a medical emergency. *—Salar News*

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Remove prohibited cables before Monday: BESCOM

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

The Bengaluru Electricity Supply Company has asked service providers to remove all unauthorised Optical Fiber Cables (OFCs), data cables and dish cables fixed on electrical poles across its jurisdiction before 8 July.In a statement, BESCOM said it will remove all illegal OFCs, data cables and dish cables if service providers fail to remove the same within the stipulated time. According to BESCOM, it has also warned that the respective service providers will be held responsible if any untoward incident happens due to illegal cables and will take legal action against the errant OFC, data and dish cable operators. *—Salar News*

Meeting on water supply in Tumakuru to be held on 9 July

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

The technical committee, formed to oversee the execution of the Hemavathi river link canal to provide drinking water to Magadi Taluk in Ramanagara and Kunigal Taluk in Tumakuru districts by filling Sriranga lake in Magadi, will hold its first meeting on 9 July. The meeting will be held in the office of the Managing Director of the Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Ltd near Ananda Rao Circle in Bengaluru, a statement issued by the Irrigation department said. Headed by retired chief engineer Arvind D Kanagile, the technical committee has Superintending Engineer B Suvarna as the Member Secretary. Retired principal engineer K Balakrishna, retired chief engineers Shankare Gowda and MG Shivakumar are members of the committee. The committee was formed on 3 July to fill the lake from the river link canal through a pipeline. It has to submit a feasibility report to the government in a month, sources in the Irrigation department said. *—PTI*

CM warns cops against hobnobbing with criminals

CM says he will take strict action against cops if found guilty

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday warned of stringent action against policemen who hobnob with realtors and criminals.

He said no crime can take place without the knowledge of police and hence the senior officials should always interact with ordinary citizens to obtain information on illegal activities taking place in a locality.

"Policemen should not be involved in hobnobbing with real estate dealers. I am telling you in clear terms that if we come to know about it, we will take stringent action," Siddaramaiah told reporters after inaugurating the 2024 Senior Police Officers Conference.

He said drug peddling, rowdyism, theft, robbery and gambling cannot happen without the knowledge of local police. "It's not possible that these things can operate without the knowledge of local police. In some places, policemen get involved with such criminals," Chief Minister said.

Siddaramaiah questioned the efficiency of the police's use of firearms by asking "What is the purpose of being armed if criminals remain undeterred?" He also underlined the need for a proper coordination between police and intelligence officials and opined that they lack it. He also insisted that policemen stay away from politics.

He recalled an incident in Vijayapura where some policemen had openly displayed the symbol of a party. "We will not tolerate any indiscipline in police force," he cautioned.

At the conference, the Chief Minister launched a new software designed to enhance the efficiency of police operations. He said senior officials will be held responsible if gambling, betting, drugs are not stopped in their jurisdiction. He said that it is mandatory for every SP, DCP and IG rank officers to visit and inspect every station in their jurisdiction as per the police manual.

"SP, IG should visit the stations from tomorrow itself. Shastra should not be finished in half an hour after visiting," he said. "Fake news is a thorn in the society and cannot be tolerated. These are increasing exponentially. We have made fact check units to prevent these," Siddaramaiah said.

Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara also attended the conference, which aimed to strengthen State's law enforcement. *—Salar News with PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with DG and IG Alok Mohan and other senior police officers during a meeting in Bengaluru, on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

'₹14,800 CR DIVERTED'

Cong govt used SC/ST funds for 5 guarantees: BJP

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

- Leader of Opposition R Ashoka alleged that the State government has already embezzled Rs 187 crore belonging to the Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation

Karnataka BJP has accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah-led Congress government of utilising Rs 14,800-crore funds meant for the Scheduled Caste Sub-plan and Tribal Sub-plan for the five guarantees. The party on Friday said the funds meant for the welfare of downtrodden communities were diverted to fulfil the poll promises.

In a post on 'X' (formerly Twitter), Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka alleged that the CM has "squandered" the funds for the SC/ST welfare on the pretext of funding the five guarantees.

According to Ashoka, Rs 7,881.91 crore of SCSP-TSP has been utilised for 'Gruhalakshmi' scheme, Rs 70.28 crore for 'Bhagyalakshmi' scheme, Rs 2585.93 crore for 'Gruhajyoti' scheme, Rs 448.15 crore for 'Annabhagya' scheme, Rs 2,187 crore for the direct benefit transfer of 'Annabhagya' scheme, and Rs 1,451.45 crore for 'Shakti' scheme and Rs 175.50 crore for 'Yuva Nidhi' scheme.

The BJP leader alleged that the State government has already embezzled Rs 187 crore belonging to the Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation.

The chief minister defended the move claiming that the SCSP-TSP funds were spent on par with the SC/ST population in the state.

"Most of the beneficiaries of these guarantees are from SC/ST communities," the Chief Minister claimed. *—PTI*

3 killed, 5 injured in cars collision near Shivamogga

SHIVAMOGGA, 6 JULY

A head-on collision between two cars on National Highway near Tree Park and Lion Safari at Tyavarekoppa, on the outskirts of Shivamogga, resulted in the death of three people and left five others injured early Saturday morning.

According to the Kunsi Police, the deceased were identified as Chandrasekhara, Siddappa, and Imam Saab. All were residents of Belagare in the Chitradurga district who were in compact sedan car. The five injured, including a foreign national, were occupants of a SUV car. The residents rushed to assist the victims, transporting the wounded to Government Meggan Hospital. Among the injured, one person's condition is critical.

Kunsi Police informed Salar News, "Both the vehicles were completely mangled by the impact. The cause of the accident appears to be excessive speeding. The collision caused significant disruption on the highway, with traffic coming to a standstill."

The authorities said that the airbags in the SUV car likely saved the lives of its passengers. *—PTI*

COMBATING DENGUE

'Dry water containers on Fridays'

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

State Department of Health and Family Welfare have designated Friday as the dry day of the week and urged citizens to prioritise cleanliness on the day by emptying water containers and cleaning water bodies.

The larvae of the dengue-causing mosquito 'Aedes Aegypti' grow due to the accumulation of water in containers and garbage. The government has advised the people to clean water-storing units such as tanks, plastic bottles and vessels to eliminate larvae growth. The procedure is: after emptying the water stored on the house premises on the dry day, the vessels need to be cleaned and kept under the sun to dry completely. Cover the containers completely after refilling them.

Meanwhile, a total of 1,10,325 dengue cases and six deaths have been reported in Karnataka from May this year till Saturday. Hassan has the highest number of positive cases in the State, the health official said. More than 2,000 people have tested positive for dengue fever this week in the City. On Friday, 146 cases and one death from Ajanapura were reported in the City.

To detect and destroy larvae along with spreading awareness about dengue, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike has visited more than 4.4 lakh houses since 28 June.

BBMP Chief Health Officer Syed Sirajuddin Madani told Salar News, "We are on the field every day. More than 1,000 teams of Asha workers, health officers and supervisors are going to homes and giving awareness to the public. We have carried out campaigns on dengue in nursing colleges." —Salar News

GOVT APPOINTS 84 MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTORS

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) has appointed 84 Motor Vehicle Inspectors (MVI) in Transport Department, following a rigorous selection process that began with a notification on 4 February, 2016.

"According to the directives from High Court of Karnataka and Supreme Court, we have verified the authenticity of the garage service experience certificates of the candidates, ensuring their credentials align with our department's recruitment rules" said Ramalinga Reddy, Minister of Transport and Muzrai, on Saturday.

To help the newly appointed MVIs adjust to their roles, a one-day workshop was held on Saturday. "The workshop ensures that they are well-prepared to undertake their responsibilities," Reddy said.

Besides, the department is taking steps to improve safety by mandating Vehicle Location Tracking Devices and Emergency Buttons for all public service vehicles to ensure the safety of passengers, especially women and children.

The mandate covers floor vans, school vehicles, private service vehicles and maxi cabs, as well as contract vehicles, motor cabs and National Highway freight vehicles operating in the State.

Of the 6,04,863 public service vehicles running in the State, only 1,979 have been equipped with the tracking device and emergency buttons.

To facilitate real-time tracking and emergency response, the department has established a 24/7 Command and Control Centre in Transport Commissioner's office.

A total of 47,64,293 vehicles registered before 1 April, 2019, have been fitted with High-Security Registration Plates. *—Salar News*

Rally raises awareness on drug addiction & rehabilitation in City

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

Suraksha Humanity Trust organised a rally in City on Saturday to educate people about the dangers of drugs and to support rehabilitation of those struggling with substance abuse.

The rally was from Jamia Masjid on JC Nagar to Russel Market in Shivajinagar Chowk, covering Rahmat Nagar, Chamundinagar, Govindapura, HBR Layout, KG Halli, DJ Halli, Frazer Town and Thimmaiah Road.

The theme of the rally was 'Say no to drugs' and about 50 motorbikes and more than 50 people joined the event, including students from New Royal English Primary and Secondary School. The rally was collaborated with human rights activists, Bengaluru police and influencers.

The rally walkers talked to more than 60 people and voiced the slogans, 'Your body deserves respect, stay drug free' and 'Drugs: one way ticket to despair'. Syed, a member of the trust, said everyone needs to become responsible and educate children about drug abuse and must ensure that they don't fall prey to drugs. *—Salar News*

The theme of the rally was 'Say no to drugs' **PHOTO: SALAR**

- About 50 motorbikes and more than 50 people joined the event, including students. The rally was collaborated with human rights activists, Bengaluru police and influencers

Congress nurturing next generation of women leaders: Shivakumar

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President DK Shivakumar, announced that Congress is actively engaging senior party women leaders in discussions to nurture the next generation of women leaders.

Following a gathering at the KPCC office, where over 40 senior women Congress members convened, Shivakumar highlighted the party's commitment to empowering women.

"We have collected inputs from senior women leaders in the party on various topics including development of the next generation of women leaders, women's feedback on guarantee schemes and ways to empower women," Shivakumar said while speaking to the reporters.

The discussions covered a broad range of strategies aimed at enhancing women's social, educational, economic, and political status.

Instructions were also given to women Congress leaders to hold meetings at the taluk level to strengthen their influence and involvement.

KPCC President DK Shivakumar honoured five women leaders in Congress party: Bimba Raikar, Sushila Krishnamurthy, Pankajakshi, Manorama and Pyarejaan.

DK Shivakumar **PHOTO: ANI**

DKS lashes out at HDK over pending pleas in Channapatna

He also lashed out at Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy saying that the flood of pleas from the people of Channapatna was a clear sign that the previous MLA had not done anything for the constituency.

"The people of Channapatna have submitted a whopping 10,000 pleas during our grievance redressal programmes over the last few weeks. From this, it is crystal clear that the former MLA Kumaraswamy has not done anything for the people. Do we need a better proof than this for the apathy of the previous MLA from Channapatna," he retorted.

Shivakumar was responding to Kumaraswamy's allegations that Congress government had failed to address the concerns of the people of Mandya as he had received 3,000 pleas during his Janata Darshan programme. *—Salar News*

DESPITE DOWNPOUR

Hassan's Madihalli records -73% deficit rain

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

Despite heavy rains and floods in many regions, especially in coastal Karnataka, as per the hobli-wise rainfall report of the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), many regions have recorded less than usual rainfall too. A hobli is a cluster of adjoining villages administered together in the State.

According to the report, four hoblis have recorded large deficits over -60 per cent during this southwest monsoon between 1 June and 6 July and 117 hoblis have recorded deficit rainfall over -20 to -59 per cent.

The highest departure from normal percentage was recorded in Madihalli hobli in Belur taluk of Hassan district at -73 per cent.

While Anavatti hobli (Soraba taluk in Shivamogga district) stood at -72 per cent, Javagal hobli in Hassan district (Arasikere taluk) recorded -64 and Lakya hobli in Chikkamagaluru recorded -60 per cent.

According to the KSNDMC report, the State recorded an actual amount of 266mm of rainfall as against the normal rainfall of 249mm, placing the state in the normal category for southwest monsoon 2024.

Meanwhile, India Meteorological Department has said coastal Karnataka received heavy to very heavy rainfall in the last 24 hours, with Castle Rock, Honavar and Ankola in Uttara Kannada receiving 170mm, 180mm and 130mm rainfall respectively. Udupi too received 150mm rainfall in the last 24 hours.

Owing to heavy rains and a red alert issued by IMD, Dakshina Kannada has already closed all anganwadis, government aided and private primary and high schools and pre-graduate colleges. *—PTI*

Coastal, South K'taka to get heavy rainfall till Tue: IMD

DAKSHINA KANNADA, 6 JULY

Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over Coastal & South Interior Karnataka from 7 to 9 July and North Interior Karnataka on 9 July as per the Indian Meteorological Department predictions.

Dakshina Kannada district administration has taken precautionary measures to ensure public safety, advising citizens and tourists to avoid low-lying areas, river banks, and seashores.

Fishermen have also been instructed not to venture into the sea for fishing activities.

Anganwadis, schools, and pre-university colleges in Dakshina Kannada district were closed on 6 July due to heavy rainfall as IMD issued a red alert.

The district administration has also instructed fishermen not to venture into the sea for fishing activities on 6 July. *—ANI*

PHOTO: SALAR

M'luru airport starts global cargo ops

MANGALURU, 6 JULY

Mangaluru International Airport on Friday has commenced the international cargo operations from its integrated cargo terminal with flight IX 815 ferrying 2,522kg of fruits and vegetables to Abu Dhabi.

The formal launch was done in the presence of the AAHL Cargo team, the leadership team of the Mangaluru International Airport as well as representatives from Customs, Airlines - IndiGo and Air India Express - and Airport Security Group of CISF, they said.

This much anticipated development comes a little over a year after the airport started domestic cargo operations on 1 May, 2023, officials said.

According to officials, the Commissioner of Customs on 10 May this year had appointed the airport as Custodian as well as a Customs Cargo Service Provider, green signalling the start of international cargo operations.

Working with regulatory authorities and airline partners, the airport, in the interim, vigorously pursued its status as Customs Cargo Service.

The start of international cargo operations will enable exporters from coastal Karnataka and Kerala and the hinterland to export perishables such as fresh fruits and vegetables, food, machine parts, textiles, shoes, tropical fish, frozen and dry fish, plastic colouring material and ship parts (propeller) in the form of belly cargo.

IndiGo and Air India Express with their connectivity will enable exporters to send cargo to Dubai, Doha, Dammam, Kuwait, Muscat, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain. *—PTI*

Flight IX 815 carried 2,533kg of fruits & vegetables to Abu Dhabi **PHOTO:SCREENGRAB**

- The start of international cargo operations will enable exporters from coastal Karnataka and Kerala and the hinterland to export perishables such as fresh fruits and vegetables, machine parts etc. in form of belly cargo

BRS suffers setback as MLA Reddy joins Congress

HYDERABAD, 6 JULY

In a fresh setback to opposition BRS in Telangana, the party's MLA Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy joined the ruling Congress on Saturday. This takes the total number of BRS MLAs who joined the Congress since the Assembly elections last year to seven. Krishna Mohan Reddy, legislator from Gadwal, joined Congress in the presence of Chief Minister and PCC president A Revanth Reddy and other party leaders at the CM's residence at Jubilee Hills here. Speculation is rife that more BRS MLAs would switch over the ruling party in the days to come. BRS had won 39 of the total 119 Assembly constituencies in the elections held last year, while Congress came to power winning 64 seats. BRS MLA from Secunderabad Cantonment G Lasya Nanditha died in a road accident this year. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Expect all to uphold Parl dignity: Om Birla

BUNDI, 6 JULY

After a tumultuous Parliament session, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday said he expects all members to uphold the dignity of the House by following rules and procedures. The three-term Lok Sabha from Kota parliamentary seat received a rousing welcome in his constituency after being elected as Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament for a second consecutive term. Asked about Rahul Gandhi's role as the Leader of the Opposition, Birla said the Rae Bareli MP holds a Constitutional post. He also said that he expects all members to uphold parliamentary dignity while discharging their duties in the House. Birla said he would endeavour to give an opportunity to all members to raise issues dear to them in the House . *—PTI*

'Cong will prepare to contest from all M'rashtra seats'

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Saturday said the party will prepare to contest from all seats in the upcoming state assembly elections but will fight as per the seat sharing agreement with its alliance partners. Talking to reporters at his Nagpur residence, Patole said it won't be wrong if the party prepares to contest the elections from all seats as it should have its organisational structure and work everywhere. The elections to the 288-member Maharashtra assembly are due in October. The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) comprises the Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) and Congress, which bagged 30 out of 48 seats in the recently held Look Sabha elections. *—PTI*

ED attaches assets of ex-J'khand minister Alamgir

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a chargesheet and also attached assets worth more than Rs 4 crore of former Jharkhand rural development minister Alamgir Alam, his ex-personal secretary and the aide's domestic help as part of a money laundering investigation. In a statement on Saturday, the federal agency said it has issued a provisional attachment order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on 4 July against Alamgir Alam, his former PS Sanjeev Kumar Lal, Lal's wife Reeta Lal and his domestic help Jahangir Alam. The cumulative value of all these assets recorded under the attachment is Rs 4.42 crore, it said. ach, jewellery and digital devices. *—PTI*

Like Ayodhya, INDIA will beat BJP in Gujarat, says Rahul

RaGa takes a jibe at PM's 'biological' remark

AHMEDABAD, 6 JULY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said by trouncing the BJP in Ayodhya, the INDIA bloc has defeated the Ram temple movement once led by LK Advani, and expressed confidence that the saffron party will meet the same fate in Gujarat in the next election.

He said Congress has been challenged and threatened by the BJP, but it will defeat the saffron party and Narendra Modi in Gujarat just the way it was defeated in Ayodhya.

Gandhi was addressing party workers here days after the Congress and BJP clashed outside the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) office when saffron party workers went there to protest against his (Gandhi's) remarks on Hindus.

"They (BJP) have challenged us by threatening us and damaging our office. Let me tell you that we are together going to break their government like they damaged our office. Take it in writing that Congress will contest in Gujarat and defeat Narendra Modi and BJP in Gujarat like we did in Ayodhya," he said.

Congress will win Gujarat, and from this state it will make a new start, he said.

Gandhi targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over BJP's defeat from the Faizabad Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh, where Ayodhya is located.

"By defeating BJP in Ayodhya, INDIA bloc has defeated the Ram Mandir movement that was launched by the BJP veteran Lal Krishna Advani. What I am saying is something very big... Congress party and INDIA bloc defeated them in Ayodhya," the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. Congress will defeat BJP in Gujarat because the "balloon of Modi's vision has burst", he said.

"In Parliament, I asked Modi as to whether he was a human being as he himself said he was non-biological and has a direct connection with god. If you are directly connected to god, then how were you defeated?" he asked.

"Modi believes that everyone else is biological - people of Gujarat, Gandhiji, farmers and labourers of India are biological...How can a person who thinks he is non-biological and the people of the country are biological offer vision to the people of Gujarat when he cannot understand the pain of labourers and those who work in diamond industry?" he asked. *—PTI*

They (BJP) have challenged us by threatening us and damaging our office. Let me tell you that we are together going to break their government like they damaged our office. Take it in writing that Congress will contest in Gujarat and defeat Narendra Modi and BJP in Gujarat like we did in Ayodhya
-Rahul Gandhi

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi addresses party workers, at PCC office, Congress Bhawan, in Ahmedabad, Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Railways, Union in war of words after RaGa's visit

AHMEDABAD, 6 JULY

The train drivers' unions have countered Railways' claim that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from the Delhi Division and were brought from outside.

On Friday, after Gandhi visited the loco pilots' crew lobby at the New Delhi Railway Station, the Chief Public Relation Officer (CPRO) of Northern Railway (NR) under which the Delhi Division falls, said that it looked like Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from crew lobby of the New Delhi Railway Station.

"It looks like they were brought from outside," Deepak Kumar, CPRO, NR, said.

Gandhi visited the crew lobby at the station and spoke to some loco-pilots to know their problems and challenges.

Various loco pilots' associations whose members were present in the lobby during Gandhi's visit countered the CPRO's statement and said that it was immaterial to focus on loco pilots' divisions and zones of work as long as they have similar grievances.

"I want to submit humbly that Mr Gandhi interacted with loco pilots from various rail divisions and not only with those who were from Delhi," R Kumaresan, President of the South Zone of the All India Loco Running Staff Association, who played a crucial role in organising this interaction between Gandhi and loco pilots, said. *—PTI*

- Various loco pilots' associations whose members were present in the lobby during Gandhi's visit countered the CPRO's statement and said that it was immaterial to focus on loco pilots' divisions

PROTEST IN TN

Bahujan Samaj Party supporters gather outside the Rajiv Gandhi Government Hospital in Chennai on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Eight suspects held in BSP leader's murder: TN Police

CHENNAI, 6 JULY

The city police on Saturday said the killing of Tamil Nadu Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief K Armstrong by a group of assailants was not political in nature and that all angles were being probed.

Eight suspects in the case were nabbed within three hours of the crime on Friday, City Police Commissioner Sandeep Rai Rathore told reporters here and denied that the BSP leader faced any threat to his life. Supporters of the slain leader claimed his killing was "planned" and demanded a CBI probe into the death of the 52-year-old former Chennai Corporation Councillor.

The leader was hacked to death by a six-member bike borne gang near his house in Perambur here on Friday.

Chief Minster MK Stalin on Saturday expressed shock over Armstrong's death and expressed his condolences and said the culprits were caught in an overnight operation.

A post-mortem on Armstrong's body was conducted at a government hospital here on Saturday.

Supporters of Armstrong staged a protest outside the hospital, demanding a CBI probe into the killing. A BSP functionary said it was a "planned murder" and claimed there was an "intelligence failure." Therefore, the central agency should probe the case.

The continued protest by Armstrong's supporters outside the hospital, located opposite the Chennai Central railway station, affected traffic movement on the busy Poonamalle High Road and they were later removed from there by the police.

Meanwhile, BSP Chief Mayawati on Saturday termed the murder of K Armstrong, president of the party's Tamil Nadu unit, as "brutal", and said the government must act to prevent similar incidents in the future. *—PTI*

Distressed: Absconding Baba says in video

HATHRAS, 6 JULY

The self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba whose sermon ended in a deadly stampede said on 6 July morning said, he was "deeply distressed" in his first public response to the disaster.

The stampede saw the deaths of 121 people, the vast majority women, after a rush to the exits among the 250,000 devotees who came to watch him preach.

The former police officer-turned-spiritual leader has not been seen in public since the stampede.

A police report issued after the stampede named several organisers of the prayer meeting sought for arrest, but Baba's name was not among them.

In a video, Bhole Baba said that he had faith that those responsible for the disaster would be punished.

"May God give us the strength to bear this pain," he added. It was not immediately clear where he was speaking from. Baba's lawyer had blamed "anti-social elements" in the crowd for the stampede.

Till Thursday, six people, including two women volunteers, who were members of the organising committee of Bhole Baba's satsang, had been arrested in the case. An FIR was lodged in the matter on 2 July under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 126 (2) (wrongful restraint), 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by the public servant) and 238 (causing disappearance of evidence). The main accused the stampede, was arrested from Delhi by Uttar Pradesh Police. *—Salar News with Agencies*

FOR MEDICAL ADVICE

Court allows Kejri's wife access to his medical records

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

A court here on Saturday allowed jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita access to his medical records and also permitted her to independently consult and seek advice from the medical board or doctors on his behalf.

The court, however, rejected Kejriwal's application seeking directions to prison authorities allowing Sunita Kejriwal to be his attendant during consultations with doctors.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja said Kejriwal had not been admitted to a hospital and according to Delhi Prison Rules, permission was granted to a family member as an attendant with an undertrial prisoner by the jail superintendent in consultation with the medical officer in-charge, only when the prisoner is admitted in hospital.

Regarding granting Kejriwal's wife access to his medical records, the court said the prison authorities did not have any objection and during the proceedings, the chief minister agreed that his medical records were being "duly shared" by the authorities concerned.

Also, Kejriwal's family members have been providing home-cooked food to him in accordance with the diet prescribed by the medical board of the AIIMS, the court said.

Regarding Kejriwal's request to permit his wife to independently consult medical board or doctors, the court said it was pointed out by Kejriwal and his advocate that this was necessary to ensure that his prescribed diet was prepared properly. *—PTI*

Sunita Kejriwal PHOTO: PTI

My husband was a victim of a deep political conspiracy. I request his supporters to rally behind him or else no educated and honest person would like to join politics.

—Sunita Kejriwal, Arvind Kejriwal's wife

SATYENDAR JAIN TO BE PROBED IN CCTV GRAFT CASE

NAGPUR, 6 JULY

Delhi L-G VK Saxena has approved a recommendation for a probe under the Prevention of Corruption Act against jailed former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain in a graft case related to CCTV installation in the city, Raj Niwas officials said on Saturday.

Jain is already in jail in a money laundering case. According to Raj Niwas officials, it has been alleged in the present case that Jain received a bribe of Rs 7 crore for waiving a penalty of Rs 16 crore imposed on a company for delay in the installation of CCTVs in 70 Assembly constituencies of Delhi.

Saxena agreed with the proposal for approval of investigation against Jain by the Anti-Corruption Branch, they added. *—PTI*

Andhra, T'gana CMs meet for 1st time in 4 yrs

HYDERABAD, 6 JULY

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was accorded a grand welcome by his Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy here on Saturday when the former came to attend a meeting aimed at resolving long-standing issues related to bifurcation of undivided Andhra.

The deliberations are taking place at the government's Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule Praja Bhavan.

Division of various state-run institutions and corporations of the undivided state, listed in Schedule 9 and Schedule 10 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act (2014), between the two states, among other issues are likely to figure in the discussions.

This is the first meeting between the chief ministers of the Telugu states in four years. Naidu had proposed the meeting on 1 July to resolve the pending issues and the next day Reddy accepted the proposal. *—PTI*

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu with Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in Hyderabad, on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Conduct NEET-UG again in transparent manner: Kharge

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Congress Party on Saturday demanded that the medical entrance exam NEET-UG be conducted again and all "paper leak scams" thoroughly investigated under the Supreme Court's supervision.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that be it NCERT books or leakage in exams, the Modi government is bent on "destroying our education system".

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The whole NEET-UG issue is getting worse by the day. The non-biological PM and his biological Education Minister are adding further proof to their demonstrated incompetence and insensitivity."

"The future of lakhs of our youth is simply unsafe in their hands," Ramesh said. *—PTI*

EOW CLOSES CASE

Clean chit for MP after switch to Shinde's side

MUMBAI, 6 JULY

Months after former Maharashtra minister and MP Ravindra Waikar switched over to Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena from the Uddhav Thackeray-led party, the Mumbai police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has filed a closure report in a case against him for alleged irregularities in the construction of a luxury hotel here, an official said on Saturday.

Once a close aide of Uddhav Thackeray, Waikar joined the Shinde-led Shiv Sena in March this year. He was a former standing committee chairman of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), a four time corporator and MLA from Jogeshwari for four terms.

As per the FIR registered against Waikar, he had entered into a contract with the BMC after getting permission to run sports facility at a plot in Jogeshwari. The permission was granted when the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was in power. In early 2023, a notice was issued to him for using the plot of land reserved for a public garden to construct a hotel.

On EOW filing the closure report, the Opposition targeted the Shinde-led government. Congress leader Sachin Sawant alleged that the closure of the case against Waikar is another example of political blackmail going on in the state for the last 10 years.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said, "Waikar ran away and left us after getting scared of the probe agencies. Now he has got a clean chit. What else can you expect? BJP should accept that it filed false cases to scare the opponents." *—PTI*

A case was filed against Maharashtra MP Ravindra Waikar for alleged irregularities in the construction of a luxury hotel in Mumbai PHOTO: PTI

Oppn questions M'rashtra over ₹11cr prize to cricketers

MUMBAI, 6 JULY

Opposition Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) in Maharashtra have raised question marks over the Eknath Shinde-led dispensation's announcement of giving Rs 11 crore reward to the T20 World Cup-winning Indian team, and alleged that by doing so, the government wants to pat itself on the back.

The Opposition parties said that while they were proud of the cricketers' achievement, there was no need to give Rs 11 crore from the state coffers and asked the chief minister to pay the amount from his own pocket.

BJP legislator Pravin Darekar, however, hit back at the Congress, accusing it of politicising the issue.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday announced Rs 11 crore cash reward for the Indian cricket team. The announcement was made in the Vidhan Bhavan (state legislature complex) here, where four Mumbai players from the team -- captain Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shivam Dubey -- were felicitated.

Talking to reporters later, Leader of Opposition in the state assembly, Vijay Wadettiwar, said, "What was the need to give Rs 11 crore from the state coffers? This is to pat your own back...Let the coffers get empty...Let the poor die. But the government wants to pat its own back." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

3 children die in Faridabad as house roof collapses

MFARIDABAD, 6 JULY

Three siblings were killed here in Sikri village when their house's eaves collapsed while they were sitting under it, police said on Saturday. Police said the eaves, commonly called 'chhajja', was not in a good condition and it collapsed after rain in the area. The owner of the house has been booked, police said, adding that they are trying to catch him. He had given out the house on rent despite the fact that it was in a dilapidated condition, they said. According to police, the three siblings – Akash, 10, Muskaan, 8, and Adil, 6, -- were sitting under the eaves late Friday evening. There was rain late in the evening in the area due to which the concrete slab collapsed making a loud noise, they said. Police said people in the area rushed to save the kids but there was a lot of debris. After removing the debris, they took the unconscious children to a nearby hospital where doctors declared all three of them dead. *—PTI*

4 bodies with cuts on neck found in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, 6 JULY

Four bodies were found in a remote village in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district on Saturday, police said. The four bodies with hands and feet tied and cut marks in the neck were found in a forest on the outskirts of Umpleng village, they said. "The bodies were found by workers on Saturday morning. We are investigating the incident," said Superintendent of Police, Giri Prasad. "We suspect that the victims were from outside the state but are not sure unless verification is completed," the SP said. The police are analysing whether the crime was committed on the spot or it was committed somewhere else and then the bodies dumped at Umpleng, the SP added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Shepherd, 60 sheep run over by truck in Rajasthan

JABALPUR, 6 JULY

A shepherd was killed along with more than 60 sheep after allegedly being run over by a truck in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district, police said on Saturday. The accident occurred late on Friday when a truck ran over the shepherd and his sheep in the Sangad area, they said. The truck driver fled the spot with his vehicle after the accident. The shepherd Hanif Khan died on the spot. Receiving information about the accident, a team from the Devikot police outpost reached the spot and sent the body to a mortuary. A case has been registered and a search is underway for the absconding truck driver, the police said. *—PTI*

1 dead while taking selfies on moving motorcycle

BEED, 6 JULY

One person died and another lost both his legs after their motorcycle met with an accident while they were taking selfies on the move on Beed bypass road, a police official said on Saturday. The incident happened on Friday afternoon and a video showing the rider and pillion smiling for selfies before the motorcycle rammed into the metal crash barrier of the road went viral on social media. "Pillion Anirudh Kalkumbe, 25 died, while rider Madhu Shelke lost both his legs. They were going to Tuljapur from Beed when the incident took place," he said.*—PTI*

9 killed after being struck by lightning in Bihar

Water level in many rivers has risen to dangerous levels due to incessant rain

Bihar Chief Minister urged people to follow advisories issued by the Disaster Management Department **PHOTO: PTI**

PATNA, 6 JULY

Nine people were killed after being struck by lightning in six districts of Bihar in the last 24 hours, officials said on Saturday.

The lightning deaths were reported from Jehanabad, Madhepura, East Champaran, Rohtas, Saran and Supaul districts, they said.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed grief over the death of nine people due to lightning and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh to each of the deceased's family members.

According to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on Saturday, Jehanabad district reported three deaths followed by two in Madhepura, one each in East Champaran, Rohtas, Saran and Supaul.

The Chief Minister urged people to follow advisories issued by the Disaster Management Department.

Meanwhile, the water level of different rivers in Bihar have started rising at several places due to torrential rain in the last 24 hours. Light to moderate rain was recorded in many districts. *—PTI*

Assam flood situation critical, 24.50 lakh affected in 30 districts

GUWAHATI, 6 JULY

Assam's flood situation remained critical on Saturday with over 24.50 lakh people reeling under the deluge in 30 districts and major rivers flowing above the danger mark at several places, an official bulletin said. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma held a meeting with officials late on Friday and reviewed the flood situation in the state. The devastating flood famed Kaziranga National Park has claimed the lives of 114 wild animals while 95 others have been rescued an official said. *—PTI*

HEAVY DOWNPOUR IN HIMACHAL LEADS TO CLOSURE OF 150 ROADS

SHIMLA, 6 JULY

Heavy rain lashed parts of Himachal, including Kangra's Dharamshala and Palampur where rainfall levels exceeded the 200-mm mark.

According to the emergency operation centre, 150 roads, including 111 in Mandi, 13 in Sirmaur, nine in Shimla, eight each in Chamba and Kullu, and one in Kangra district, are closed for traffic following torrential rains

The centre also said that 334 transformers are disrupted and 55 water supply schemes have been affected in the state.

Kangra's Dharamshala recorded the highest rainfall of 214.6 mm, followed by Palampur 212.4 mm, Jogindernagar 169 mm, Kangra city 157.6 mm, Baijnath 142 mm, Jot 95.2 mm, Nagrota Suriyan 90.2 mm, Sujanpur Tira 72 mm, Dhaulakuan 70 mm, Ghamroor 68.2 mm, Nadaun 63 mm and Berthin 58.8 mm. The Shimla meteorological office has issued a "yellow" alert, warning for thunderstorms and lightning at isolated places till July 12.

Other tourist destinations of Dalhousie received 31 mm of rain, Manali received 30 mm, Kasauli 24 mm, Narkanda 19 mm and Shimla 17.2 mm. According to the parameters, 2.5-15.5 mm of rain is considered light rainfall, 15.6 mm-64.4 mm as moderate, 64.5-115.5 mm as heavy, 115.6-204.4 mm as very heavy and over 204.5 mm as extremely heavy. *—PTI*

Andhra recorded 166.9 mm of rainfall between 1 June and 5 July **PHOTO: ANI**

Badrinath National Highway blocked by debris, in Chamoli district, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

2 tourists from Hyd dead after being hit by boulders in Chamoli

GOPESHWAR, 6 JULY

Two tourists from Hyderabad died in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Saturday after being hit by boulders following a landslide, police said.They said the accident occurred on the Badrinath National Highway near Chatwapeepal between Gauchar and Karnaprayag.Police said Nirmal Shahi , 36, and Satya Narayana, 50, were returning from the Himalayan temple on a motorcycle when they were hit by the boulders rolling down the hill. *—PTI*

ANDHRA BRACES FOR MORE RAIN UNTIL 9 JULY

VISAKHAPATNAM, 6 JULY

More rainfall is forecast for Andhra Pradesh with the India Meteorological Department predicting thunderstorms in the state until next Tuesday.

"On Saturday, thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely at isolated places over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema. Strong winds with a speed of 30-40 kmph are likely over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh," the IMD stated.

On Sunday, heavy rain is likely at isolated places over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam as per the weather department forecast.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely at isolated places over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on Sunday. Also on Sunday, strong winds with a speed of 30-40 kmph are likely over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh,Yanam and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

According to the IMD, Andhra Pradesh recorded 166.9 mm of rainfall between 1 June and 5 July. *—ANI*

Kerala sees 4th brain eating ameoba case

KOZHIKODE, 6 JULY

Another case of amoebic meningoencephalitis, a rare brain infection caused by a free-living amoeba found in contaminated waters, has been reported from Kerala. A 14-year-old boy, a resident of Payyoli in the northern Kerala district, is afflicted with the disease, according to sources in the private hospital where he is being treated.

This is the fourth case of the rare brain infection reported in the state since May and all the patients are children, three of whom have already died. In the latest case, one of the doctors treating the boy said that he was admitted to the hospital on July 1, and his condition is improving.The infection was identified quickly at the hospital and treatment, including medicines from abroad, was given immediately.

On Wednesday, a 14-year-old boy infected with the free-living amoeba died. Prior to that, two others, a five-year-old girl from Malappuram and a 13-year-old girl from Kannur died on 21 May and 25 June, respectively, due to the rare brain infection.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday held a meeting in which several suggestions, including not to bathe in unclean waterbodies, were given to prevent further infection, there should be proper chlorination of swimming pools and children should be careful when entering waterbodies as they are mostly affected by this disease, the statement said.

It was also suggested that there should be proper chlorination of swimming pools and children should be careful when entering waterbodies as they are mostly affected by this disease, the statement said.

Medical experts said the infection occurs when free-living, non-parasitic amoebae bacteria enter the body through the nose from contaminated water. The disease was earlier reported in Alappuzha in 2023 and 2017. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

HC ALLOWS MINOR RAPE VICTIM TO ABORT PREGNACY

HYDERABAD, 6 JULY

The Telangana High Court has allowed a 12-year-old girl, a rape survivor, to abort a 26-week foetus and accordingly directed the Superintendent of state-run Gandhi Hospital here to terminate the pregnancy.

The court also ordered that the termination of pregnancy or surgical procedure, as the case may be, shall be performed by a senior most gynaecologist of the hospital and collect the tissue and blood samples of the foetus for conducting DNA and other tests. Earlier, the doctors informed the victim's mother that since the girl had advanced pregnancy beyond 24 weeks, the same cannot be terminated . *—PTI*

NHRC notice to states on sex trade by anti-social elements

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Chief Secretaries and the police chief of all the states and union territories over reports that women are allegedly being forced into sex trade by anti-social elements on the pretext of providing them with lucrative job opportunities.

In a statement on Friday, the NHRC observed the content of a news report quoting statements by women arrested during a raid, if true, raises a serious concern relating to the life, liberty, equality and dignity of women, irrespective of caste, religion and geographical boundaries. "The media report, carried on 1 July, indicates that most of the arrested women during a raid at a hotel in Ranchi, Jharkhand, got into sex trade out of compulsion and helplessness. Many of them were pushed into this web by their relatives and some of them were forced to enter into this ugly business to fulfil the needs of their families and could not come out of the vicious network of anti-social elements once got into their grip," it said.

The news report indicates that the victim women are natives of different places, "trapped in the name of a job" and their handlers are reportedly operating from distant locations. This indicates the "depth of the crime syndicate" across the country. *—PTI*

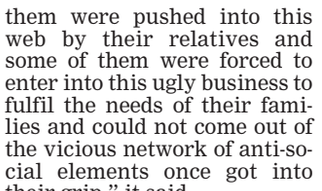


PHOTO: PTI

Delhi HC allows woman to terminate 30-week pregnancy

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

The Delhi High Court has allowed a 31-year-old woman to undergo medical termination of her pregnancy of around 30 weeks after the foetus was found to have a neuro-developmental disorder.

The court, in an order passed on Friday, said the law ensures that women are not compelled to carry such pregnancies to term where the child would be born with severe abnormalities. In view of a report given by a board of doctors from AIIMS, the court observed that the diagnosis indicated that the child, if born, would likely face severe neurological impairments and extensive health challenges on account of 'Joubert Syndrome'. *—PTI*

47 students die of AIDS in Tripura

WEST TRIPURA, 6 JULY

As many as forty-seven students died from AIDS in Tripura, and 828 have tested HIV-positive, according to a senior official of the Tripura State AIDS Control Society (TSACS). "We have so far registered 828 students who are HIV positive. Out of them, 572 students are still alive and we have lost 47 people due to the dreaded infection. Many of the students have migrated out of Tripura for higher studies in coveted institutions across the country," a senior official of the TSACS said.

TSACS has identified students from as many as 220 schools and 24 colleges and universities who take injectable drugs. The recent data shows that almost every day, five to seven new cases of HIV are being detected. Addressing a media workshop organized jointly by the Tripura Journalist Union, Web Media Forum and TSACS, the Joint Director of TSACS shared a statistical presentation of the overall scenario of HIV in Tripura. He said, "So far, 220 schools and 24 colleges and universities have been identified where students are found to be addicted to intervenous drug abuse. We have collected the data from a total of 164 health facilities across the state. Reports are collected from almost all the blocks and subdivisions." *—ANI*

BOOST TO INDIAN DEFENCE

The Defence Research and Development Authority (DRDO) started testing its light battle tank Zorawar in Gujarat's Hazira on Saturday. Jointly developed by DRDO and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Limited, Zorawar is built to meet the Indian Army's requirements in the eastern Ladakh sector against Chinese deployment across the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The 25-ton Zorawar is a first tank that has been designed and made ready for trials in the record time of two years **PHOTO: ANI**

CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

POCSO Act being misused against teens: HC

PRAYAGRAJ, 6 JULY

Granting bail to a man who allegedly eloped with and married a minor girl, the Allahabad High Court has expressed concern over the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act being "misused" in cases involving consensual romantic relationships between teenagers.

Justice Krishan Pahal said the challenge lies in distinguishing between genuine cases of exploitation and those involving consensual relationships.

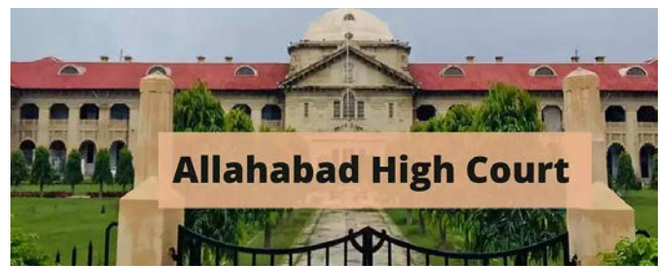
"While the POCSO Act's primary objective is to protect children under the age of majority (18) from sexual exploitation, there are cases where it has been misused, particularly in consensual romantic relationships between teenage persons " the court said in its order dated 3 July.

Granting bail to the accused, Satish alias Chand, Justice Pahal said, "Admittedly, the age of the victim is 18 years as per the ossification test report. The Supreme Court in Jaya Mala vs. State of J&K 1982 and in another case has opined that the radiologist cannot predict the correct date of birth rather there is a long margin of 1 to 2 years on either side."

Satish had been in jail since 5 January.

An FIR was lodged against him under sections 363 (kidnapping), 366 (kidnapping and abducting a woman to compel her marriage or to cause her defilement) and 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code and under POCSO at Barahaj police station in Deoria district. During the court proceedings, Satish's counsel argued that his client was falsely implicated in the case.

The victim and the petitioner were in love with each other. They eloped and solemnized their marriage in a temple out of the fear of their parents. *—PTI*



The court said the challenge lies in distinguishing between genuine cases of exploitation and those involving consensual relationships **PHOTO: ANI**

SC to hear plea on free sanitary pads for students

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on 8 July a plea seeking directions to the Centre and states to provide free sanitary pads to girl students of class 6-12 and ensure separate female toilet facilities in all government-aided and residential schools.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JP Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is scheduled to hear the plea of Congress leader and social worker Jaya Thakur in which she has highlighted the difficulties faced by adolescent females from poor backgrounds in the schools.

On 5 February, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati informed that the Centre is in the process of collating all necessary material to form a national policy on the distribution of menstrual hygiene products to school-going girls in terms of the orders dated 10 April, 2023, and 6 November, 2023.

On 13 June, the Union education ministry, said girls should be allowed to take necessary restroom breaks during board exams for classes 10 and 12 and free sanitary napkins must be made available. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SPAIN'S BULL FESTIVAL

Revelers pack the main square during the start of nine days of uninterrupted partying in Pamplona's famed running-of-the-bulls festival in Pamplona, Spain, Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

LIFE & DEATH IN GAZA'S 'SAFE ZONE'

Displaced Palestinians from areas in eastern Khan Younis flee after the Israeli army issued a new evacuation order ***PHOTO: PTI/ @UNICEF***

An Israeli airstrike slammed into a residential building next to the main medical centre in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis, wounding at least seven people, hospital authorities and witnesses said Wednesday.

Nasser Hospital sits in the western part of the city, which is inside the Israeli-designated humanitarian "safe zone" where Palestinians have been told to go, according to maps provided by Israel's military. The latest Israeli evacuation order affected about 250,000 people earlier this week across wide swathes of Gaza, the United Nations estimated.

As dust from Wednesday's bombing billowed through a street near Nasser Hospital, an Associated Press contributor filmed people running in all directions — some rushing toward the destruction and some away. Men carried two young boys, apparently wounded. Later, civil defence first responders and bystanders picked their way across chunks of cement and twisted metal, searching for people who might have been buried.

Displaced families ordered out of eastern Khan Younis on Monday have struggled to find places to live in overcrowded shelters and open areas in the western parts of the city. Wednesday's airstrike hit an area that also includes a school-turned-shelter for displaced people, many of whom are living in makeshift tents.

"We were sitting in this tent, three people, and we were surprised by the rubble and dust," said one man, Jalal Lafi, who was displaced from the city of Rafah in the south.

"The house was bombed without any warning, hit by two missiles in a row, one after another," he said, looking back over his shoulder at the rubble, his hair and clothes covered in grey soot.

- Israeli restrictions, the ongoing fighting and the breakdown of law and order have curtailed humanitarian aid efforts, causing widespread hunger and sparking fears of famine

Andrea De Domenico, the head of the UN humanitarian office for the Palestinian territories, said Gaza is "the only place in the world where people cannot find a safe refuge, and can't leave the front line." Even in so-called safe areas there are bombings, he told reporters Wednesday in Jerusalem.

An Israeli airstrike Tuesday killed a prominent Palestinian doctor and eight members of his extended family, just hours after they complied with military orders to evacuate their home and moved to the Israeli-designated safe zone.

Most Palestinians are either heading to a coastal area called Muwasi, which is filled with sprawling tent camps that have few basic services, and the nearby city of Deir al-Balah, De Domenico said.

He said it's been "a major challenge" to even bring food to those two areas. The Israeli military estimates some 1.9 million people are now clustered in central Gaza.

Israeli restrictions, the ongoing fighting and the breakdown of law and order have curtailed humanitarian aid efforts, causing widespread hunger and sparking fears of famine.

"It's an unendurable life," said Anwar Salman, a displaced Palestinian. "If they want to kill us, let them do it. Let them drop a nuclear bomb and finish us. We are fed up. We are tired. We are dying every day." *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Here's what you need to know about AI laptops

Over the last few weeks, Dell, HP, Samsung, Lenovo and other PC makers released nearly a dozen new Windows laptops, all packing AI processors and features. Microsoft calls them "Copilot+ PCs" — a nod to its Copilot AI chatbot — and you're going to see a lot of them this year, both online and at retail stores.

With prices starting at $999, some of these new types of PCs can seem like tantalizing deals, whether for you or someone heading off to school this fall. But after testing Microsoft's Surface Laptop and Lenovo's Yoga Slim 7x, one thing seems clear: The reasons an AI PC might suit you well may not have anything to do with AI.

What is an AI PC, exactly?

Basically, it's tech industry slang for a computer with a processor that has a specialized part called an NPU, or neural processing unit, that's tuned to run artificial intelligence features directly on your PC.

Think of it this way: Imagine you're back in school and you desperately need help with calculus. You could try to power through it, but the smart move is tapping a math-fiend pal to help you crunch numbers. In this case, that buddy is the NPU, except instead of helping with differentials, it's doing the calculations that help generate wacky images on the fly.

While they don't look it, Microsoft's current batch of Copilot+ PCs are pretty distinct from the Windows computers you've used. That's thanks to an interesting chip choice: These PCs use processors from Qualcomm rather than Intel or AMD, which means they run a bit differently. This is mostly a good thing, but there are some downsides — more on those later.

What can this AI do for me?

Here's what you have to look forward to, ranked from my most used to the least.

Studio Effects for your webcam. Some Windows 11 PCs already have these, which you can use to blur your background while on video calls. Microsoft tweaked the feature for Copilot+ PCs to include a tool for making your eyes look like you're staring straight ahead, even while you're glancing off to the side to read your notes aloud.

A chatbot companion. Microsoft's Copilot chatbot is already part of Windows 11, but now you can press a dedicated button on your keyboard to start talking to it. The catch? It's really not that different from just talking to it on a website. And in some ways, Copilot is actually less capable here than before.

On Windows 11 PCs that don't have these fancy new chips in them, you can ask Copilot to interact with some of your computer's settings — say, for switching to dark mode or setting timers. That's totally gone from Copilot+ PCs, which is a bummer for anyone hoping their parents could ask an AI to tweak their computer instead of calling over and over.

You can also just turn things over to AI entirely with an Image Creator feature — except you have to be connected to the internet and have a Microsoft account to do it. You may as well ask ChatGPT to do it for you in the first place.

Are these AI PCs actually worth it?

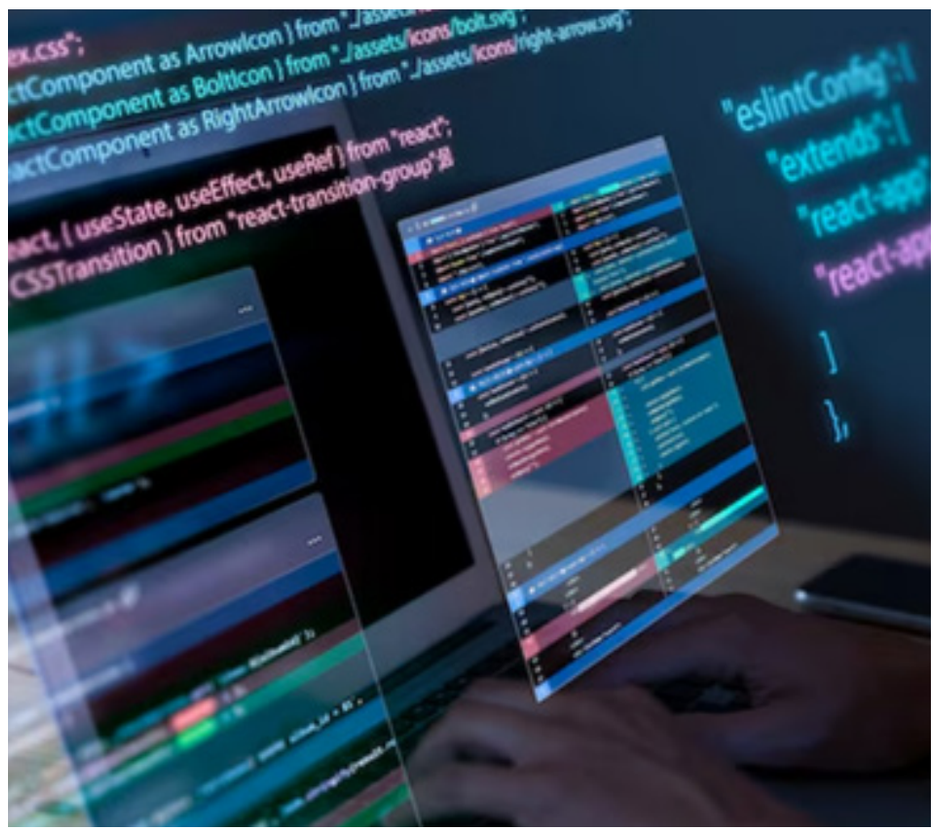
They can be, even if the AI stuff is a disappointment.

Because of the chips you'll find in these Copilot+ PCs, you can expect to see some really nice battery life. Take the Surface Laptop ($999+) I've been testing: After putting it through a full day's worth of writing, taking video calls, trying out games and editing photos, it often had between 20 and 30 percent charge left before I shut its lid for the night.

On days mostly spent in a web browser, meanwhile, you could use the laptop for eight hours straight without even hitting the 50 percent mark.

Blame an interesting chip quirk. All of the apps you've ever used on a Windows computer were designed for one underlying foundation, or "architecture," but Qualcomm's chips use a different one. And that means apps you want to use sometimes won't run.

—Washingtonpost



AI is a tech industry slang for a computer with a processor that has a specialized part called an neural processing unit, that's tuned to run AI features directly on your PC ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Gen Z & social media are the fuel for spiritual tourism in India

In India, some members of Generation Z prefer temples over nightclubs.

Shivam Dwivedi, a native of Prayagraj district in Uttar Pradesh, prays at a neighbourhood temple at least twice a week.

The 19-year-old and his friends have shunned trips to beach and party destinations popular with this age group. Instead, Dwivedi and his friends Saurabh Shukla, 21, and Anand Dwivedi, 20, prefer to visit important Hindu shrines, some in remote corners of the country.

The friends, who are studying engineering, told Al Jazeera they get mental peace and find a "source of energy" on their trips to religious places.

Parties and a dazzling nightlife do not attract them, Shivam Dwivedi added. "We have never planned a visit to Goa and other such places where people go just for raging parties, casinos and nightlife. We want peace and positivity that is available in religious places and in nature," he explained.

Impact of social media

Faith-based holidays make up 60 percent of India's domestic tourism, according to a March report by the real estate consultancy CBRE South Asia Pvt Ltd.

The industry is estimated to grow at a compounded annual rate of 16.2 per cent and is likely to reach $4.6 billion in size by 2033, according to the report.

Some of that business is being driven by members of Gen Z (those born between 1997 and 2012).

The consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya in January and coverage of the event in social and news media have helped fuel interest.

Giresh Vasudev Kulkarni, founder of Temple Connect, a company that provides information on Hindu temples to global pilgrims, said the widespread use of social media coupled with curiosity among young people has helped lead to an increase in spiritual tourism in the country. "The young generation is completely hooked to social media where people are creating content by reaching even those places which were considered far off and remote till a few years ago. Such contents when posted on YouTube and other social media platforms generate curiosity among people, especially youths to visit there for making similar content or to offer prayers," Kulkarni explained.

New roads connecting Varanasi and Ayodhya, both cities in Uttar Pradesh, have cut travel time down to four hours from six, he said.

Pilgrims have also been tacking on a trip to Sarnath, about 10km (6 miles) northeast of Varanasi. It is considered the place where Gautama Buddha gave his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.

In April alone, Varanasi received about 8.2 million visitors, according to RK Rawat, deputy director of tourism for the Varanasi and Vidyanchal division. And about 150,000 visitors on average visit the Ram temple per day since it opened to the public, the state's chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, told local media.

Spiritual travel makes up 60 per cent of tourism in our country ***PHOTO: AL JAZEERA***

Government efforts

In 2015, the federal government introduced a scheme called the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive, or PRASHAD, which is Hindi for food offered to the gods. Under that scheme, it has spent 16.3 billion rupees ($195.43m) to develop infrastructure around 73 religious sites.

It has also introduced high-speed trains connecting some of these sites with other big cities and has proposed international airports in cities like Ayodhya and Puri, providing easier access to foreign tourists. It also offers interest-free loans to states to set up malls to showcase their unique products.

State governments, too, have played a role in attracting more tourists to important shrines.

In January, the Odisha government opened a 75-metre (250ft) passage that it had built around the outer walls of the Jagannath Temple in Puri, which it developed at an investment of 8 billion rupees ($96m). Its air-conditioned sections as well as drinking water and toilet facilities are a welcome escape for devotees from the searing heat and humidity as they wait in line to enter the temple.

Business booming

The rise in spiritual tourism has been profitable for the sectors connected with it, including hospitality and retail, which are jumping on the trend with wellness packages, including yoga retreats, meditation centres, and food and shopping around those themes.

CBRE report identified 14 Indian cities – including Amritsar, Ajmer, Varanasi, Ayodhya and Puri – as key cities witnessing this boom.

Debasis Kumar, vice president of the Hotel Association of Puri, told Al Jazeera that the average occupancy of the hotels in the city has shot up from 70 percent in the pre-pandemic era to 90 percent now.

"Puri has a unique advantage of having a temple and a sea beach that attracts young generation," Kumar said.

"It is difficult to find quality manpower [to keep up with the tourist influx], and the layoffs during COVID have been haunting the industry. We are also noticing young people booking rooms in the hotels, and most of them are also driving solo to reach here and spending time in the temple. The chaos-free corridor attracts the young generation." *—Al Jazeera*

Pezeshkian: Iran's new 'reformist' president-elect

He got nearly 3 million votes more than Saeed Jalili

Continued from Page 1...

DUBAI, 6 JULY

Pezeshkian's win still sees Iran at a delicate moment, with tensions high in the Mideast over the Israel-Hamas war, Iran's advancing nuclear program, and a looming election in the United States that could put any chance of a detente between Tehran and Washington at risk. Pezeshkian's victory also wasn't a rout of Jalili, meaning he'll have to carefully navigate Iran's internal politics as the doctor has never held a sensitive, high-level security post.

The first round of voting 28 June saw the lowest turnout in the history of the Islamic Republic since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iranian officials have long pointed to turnout as a sign of support for the country's Shiite theocracy.

Government officials up to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei predicted a higher participation rate as voting got underway, with state television airing images of modest lines at some polling centres across the country.

The first round of voting 28 June saw the lowest turnout in the history of the Islamic Republic since the 1979 *PHOTO: X/@AWESOMEPEOPLEUK*

Authorities put the turnout in Friday's election at 49.6 per cent, still historically low for an Iranian presidential election. They counted 6,07,575 voided votes in the contest — which often are a sign of protest by those who feel obligated to cast a ballot but reject both candidates.

"I don't expect anything from him — I am happy that the vote put the brake on hard-liners," said bank employee Fatemeh Babaei, who voted for Pezeshkian. "I hope Pezeshkian can return administration to a way in which all people can feel there is a tomorrow."

Pezeshkian, who speaks Azeri, Farsi and Kurdish, campaigned on outreach to Iran's many ethnicities. He represents the first Iranian president from western Iran in decades — something people hope will aid the county as those in the West are considered more tolerant because of the ethnic and religious diversity in their area.

Iran is also enriching uranium at near weapons-grade levels and maintains a stockpile large enough to build several nuclear weapons, should it choose to do so. And while Khamenei remains the final decision-maker on matters of state, whichever man ends up winning the presidency could bend the country's foreign policy toward either confrontation or collaboration with the West. *—PTI*

Tornadoes kill 5, injure 83 in China

BEIJING, 6 JULY

Five people were confirmed dead after tornadoes struck a city in the eastern Chinese province of Shandong, according to local media reports Saturday. Tornadoes struck parts of the city of Heze on Friday afternoon, including the counties of Dongming and Juancheng, injuring 88 people. That includes five who were later confirmed dead, according to the state-owned Xinhua news agency. Authorities said that 2,820 houses, 48 power supply lines and over 4,000 hectares of crops were damaged. Communication, power and water supplies have since been restored, state media said. Tornadoes are usually seen in China's southern and coastal provinces such as Guangdong and Jiangsu, according to China Weather News, run by the China Meteorological Administration. *—AP*

Hurricane Beryl wreaks havoc in Mexico's coast

MEXICO, 6 JULY

Hurricane Beryl has lashed Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula after wreaking havoc across the Caribbean, causing at least 10 deaths. It made landfall as a category-two hurricane early on Friday, bringing winds of up to 175kmh. It was later downgraded to a tropical storm, but is expected to re-intensify over the Gulf the Mexico at the weekend. Beryl brought heavy rain to tourist hotspots of Cancún and Tulum. No major damage was reported but the high winds felled trees and caused power outages. The high winds brought down trees and structures including billboards. Civil protection chief Laura Velazquez said power would be fully restored to those still without it by Sunday. Tulum resident Carolina Vazquez was among those to be affected by the outages. *—ANI*

PHOTO: X/ @COBRATATE

Tate granted EU travel consent prior to Romania trial

BUCHAREST, 6 JULY

Self-proclaimed misogynist influencer Andrew Tate has been granted permission to leave Romania but must remain within the European Union pending his trial on charges of human trafficking and rape, a Romanian court ruled on Friday, CNN reported. According to CNN affiliate Antena 3, the ruling from the Bucharest court allows Andrew Tate, along with his brother Tristan and two other defendants, to travel freely within the EU until their trial. A spokesperson representing the Tate brothers hailed the court's decision as a "significant victory and a major step forward" in their legal battle. "We embrace and applaud the decision of the court today, I consider it a reflection of the exemplary behaviour and assistance of my clients. *—PTI*

Employees protest Pakistan's 'tax-filled' budget

ISLAMABAD, 6 JULY

Employees of a private company staged a protest against the recently announced 'tax filled' budget 2024-25 which further burdened the inflation hit salary class citizens of Pakistan, ARY News reported. Hundreds of employees of a private company participated in the protest staged at Islamabad's Blue area, ARY News reported on Friday. The President of the private company stated that people are not able to bear the tax recently imposed by the government on the salaried class. He highlighted that the government should have revised the tax policy as the inflation-hit citizens already considering leaving the country. The protestors appealed to the government to withdraw the taxes imposed in the recently announced budget 2024-25. *—ANI*

2 MILLION PEOPLE FLEE

Gaza: Israeli strikes kill 6, including kids, UN worker

DEIR AL-BALAH, 6 JULY

Separate Israeli airstrikes killed at least six people Friday in central Gaza, including two children at a home and at least one United Nations worker, Palestinian hospital officials and first responders said, even as stalled cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas show signs of renewed momentum.

Four out of every five people in Gaza — nearly 2 million Palestinians — have been driven into the territory's centre by expanding Israeli military offensives and evacuation orders, the army estimated earlier this week. Civilians are taking shelter in makeshift tent camps and crowded urban areas, and many have been displaced multiple times.

Hamas has given initial approval for a US-backed proposal for a phased cease-fire deal in Gaza, dropping a key demand that Israel give an up-front commitment for a complete end to the war, a Hamas and an Egyptian official said Saturday. They still want "written guarantees" from mediators that Israel will continue to negotiate a permanent cease-fire deal once the first phase goes into effect, the two officials said.

Palestinians displaced by Israeli air and ground offensive on Gaza *PHOTO: PTI*

A team of Israeli negotiators will resume talks next week on a cease-fire and hostage exchange deal with Hamas, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Friday, signaling progress toward a deal to end the war in Gaza after negotiations appeared stuck for weeks.

The brief Israeli statement came hours after Hamas said its proposed amendments to a US plan for a cease-fire "have been met with a positive response by the mediators." *—AP*

IMRAN WARNS OF HUNGER STRIKE IF 'DENIED JUSTICE'

ISLAMABAD, 6 JULY

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has called on Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa to recuse himself from the benches hearing cases related to the political party, Pakistan-based Dawn reported. Also, PTI founder Imran Khan has said that he was contemplating going on a hunger strike if he continued to be denied justice. Speaking to reporters after attending court proceedings in the £190m corruption case on Friday, former Pakistan PM Imran Khan said that the decision on the cases must be made on the basis of 'like or dislike', as all citizens are equal before the law. He stated that every other case involving PTI was fixed before CJP Isa despite his lawyer's objection to the CJP's presence on the bench. The PTI founder said that his legal team wanted such cases to be transferred away from Courtroom 1, according to Dawn report. Imran Khan reiterated his allegation that Adiala Jail was being managed by some colonel or major and added that the jail superintendent served "under their command" who did not allow him to meet with PTI leaders. *—ANI*

Biden says he was ill during debate with Trump

WASHINGTON, 6 JULY

US President Joe Biden on Friday said he had "a bad night" and he was "exhausted" and "sick" during his first presidential debate with his Republican rival Donald Trump.

He asserted that only the "Lord Almighty" could make him drop out of the race to win the November 5 election. Biden, 81, said this in a television interview, a week after his subpar debate performance in Atlanta on 27 June against Trump, following which some of his own party leaders started urging him to step down and his approval rating plummeted.

Joe Biden *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

Seeking his second term from his fellow Americans, Biden alleged that Trump is a pathological liar. "It was a bad episode. No indication of any serious condition. I was exhausted. I didn't listen to my instincts in terms of preparing and -- and a bad night," Biden told ABC News during his first interview after the debate, adding that his top party leadership are asking him to stay in the race.

Blaming himself for the bad debate night, Biden said, "Yeah, look. The whole way I prepared, nobody's fault but mine. I prepared what I usually would do sitting down as I did come back with foreign leaders or National Security Council for explicit detail," adding that Trump "lied 28 times" during the debate. Biden said none of the major Democratic party leaders have asked him to drop out and asserted that he would withdraw only if the "Lord Almighty" asked him to. "If the Lord Almighty came down and said 'Joe, get out of the race,' I'd get out of the race. The lord Almighty's not coming down," he added. *—PTI*

4th July violence: 'Chicago in state of grief'

WASHINGTON, 6 JULY

Shootings and other violence during the extended Fourth of July weekend have left at least 33 people dead, including 11 in Chicago, and injured dozens more nationwide, authorities said. The Fourth of July historically is one of the nation's deadliest days of the year. A flurry of shootings around the holiday a year ago left more than a dozen people dead and over 60 wounded. And a year before that, seven people died in a mass shooting at a Fourth of July parade near Chicago.

Violence and mass shootings often increase in the summer months, with more people gathering for social events, teens out of school and hotter temperatures.

In Chicago alone, 11 people had been killed and 55 wounded in shootings as of Friday morning during the extended July Fourth weekend, the Chicago Sun-Times reported. The violence included a mass shooting on Thursday that killed two women and an 8-year-old boy. The recent violence "has left our city in a state of grief," Mayor Brandon Johnson said.

In Huntington Beach, California, two people were killed and three others injured in an Independence Day attack less than two hours after a fireworks show ended, police said. Authorities arrested a suspect after responding to reports of an assault with a deadly weapon Thursday night. *—AP*

United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer promises to take control of migration *PHOTO: PTI*

NATO summit is among first tasks for new UK PM

LONDON, 6 JULY

After a draining six-week election campaign, the New British Prime Minister Keir Starmer get straight to work assembling his government, tackling a mountain of domestic problems and putting his stamp on the UK's relations with the rest of the world.

Starmer promises to take control of migration and stop people making dangerous journeys across the English Channel in small boats, but he will cancel the Conservative government's controversial plan to send asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda.

Starmer faces a daunting range of domestic challenges, underlaid by the widespread sense that many facets of Britain's public life have broken down during 14 years of Conservative rule.

The country's aging infrastructure is creaking and the state-funded National Health Service is at breaking point, with long waiting lists for treatment, a situation has been worsened by a long-running series of doctors' strikes.

Appoint a Government

He has a plethora of lawmakers to choose from - his Labour Party won more than 400 seats in Thursday's election, almost two-thirds of the 650 in the House of Commons.

Key players in the new administration include Treasury chief Rachel Reeves - a former Bank of England economist and the first woman to hold that job. The new foreign secretary, Britain's top diplomat, is David Lammy, a Harvard Law School graduate.

Make friends on the world stage

Starmer has said his message to the world from the UK is: "We're back."

He takes office at a time of multiple crises - including the war in Ukraine and the Middle East, a surging far right, a muscle-flexing China - that will test the cool head he honed in his former job as Britain's chief prosecutor.

Malcolm Chalmers, deputy director general of the Royal United Services Institute, a military think-tank, said Britain "has the most stable government of all the major Western democracies."

On 18 July, Starmer will host leaders from across Europe at England's Blenheim Palace for a meeting of the 47-nation European Political Community. *—PTI*

Indian-origin MP Lisa among women in Cabinet

Lisa Nandy *PHOTO: X/@LISANANDY*

Lisa Nandy, the Indian-origin member of Parliament re-elected from Wigan in north-west England, will assume her position at Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Cabinet table on Saturday as his new Culture Secretary alongside a record number of fellow women ministers. The 44-year-old MP was appointed Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport among 11 women picked for top jobs by Starmer as he got straight to work after a landslide Labour general election win on Friday. *—PTI*

BHUTTO ACCEPTS LACK OF CLARITY IN PAK POLLS 2024

QUETTA, 6 JULY

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has criticised the transparency of the 2024 general elections, describing them as "not transparent." Despite acknowledging rigging against his party in every election, he refuted claims that the February 8th elections saw the largest rigging in Pakistan's history, as reported by ARY News.

Speaking at a press conference in Quetta, Bilawal emphasised the need to end the recurring issue of rigging in elections through political consensus. "The politicians need to agree that the match should be played fairly and the result should also be accepted," he asserted.

Bilawal highlighted PPP's proactive role in advocating for election reforms, lamenting occasional hindrances from rival parties or individual politicians. He pointed out ongoing cases of election rigging being adjudicated in election tribunals, underscoring the importance of fair electoral practices. Regarding developmental initiatives, Bilawal praised the Sindh government's achievements in healthcare, citing the establishment of a state-of-the-art hospital. He pledged similar advancements in Quetta, ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare and education for its residents. "The hospital in Naseerabad, Balochistan, will match the standards set by the Gambat facility," Bilawal affirmed. Discussing PPP's manifesto, Bilawal reiterated the party's stance on the abolition of the National Accountability Bureau. *—ANI*

Thousands in Ukraine without power after shelling

KYIV, 6 JULY

Russian strikes overnight left over 1,00,000 households without power in northern Ukraine and cut off the water supply to a regional capital, Ukrainian authorities reported Saturday, while civilian casualties rose sharply in the country's embattled east.

The northern Sumy region, which borders Russia, was plunged into dark after Russian strikes late Friday damaged energy infrastructure, the Ukrainian Energy Ministry said. Hours later, the Ukrainian public broadcaster reported that Russian drones hit the provincial capital, also called Sumy, cutting off water by hitting power lines that feed its system of pumps.

Russian state agency RIA cited a local pro-Kremlin "underground" leader as saying that Moscow's forces overnight hit a plant producing rocket ammunition in the city, which had a pre-war population of over 2,56,000. The report didn't specify what weapon was used, and the claim could not be independently verified. Explosions rocked the city during an air raid warning early Saturday, according to Ukrainian media reports.

In the Donetsk region in the east, Russian shelling on Friday and overnight killed 11 civilians and wounded 43, local Gov. Vadym Filashkin reported on Saturday. Five people died in the town of Selydove southeast of Pokrovsk, the eastern city that has emerged as a front-line hotspot. The Ukrainian General Staff on Saturday morning said that Ukrainian and Russian forces clashed 45 times near Pokrovsk over the previous day. *—AP*

'LITTERED WITH GARBAGE'

Mt Everest camp will take years to clean

KATHMANDU, 6 JULY

The highest camp on the world's tallest mountain is littered with garbage that is going to take years to clean up, according to a Sherpa who led a team that worked to clear trash and dig up dead bodies frozen for years near Mount Everest's peak.

The Nepal government-funded team of soldiers and Sherpas removed 11 tons (24,000 pounds) of garbage, four dead bodies and a skeleton from Everest during this year's climbing season. Ang Babu Sherpa, who led the team of Sherpas, said there could be as much as 40-50 tons (88,000-110,000 pounds) of garbage still at South Col, the last camp before climbers make their attempt on the summit.

The Nepal government-funded team of soldiers and Sherpas removed 11 tons of garbage *PHOTO: @KITTYLUVSHORROR*

"The garbage left there was mostly old tents, some food packaging and gas cartridges, oxygen bottles, tent packs, and ropes used for climbing and tying up tents," he said, adding that the garbage is in layers and frozen at the 8,000-meter (26,400-foot) altitude where the South Col camp is located.

"Most of the garbage is from older expeditions," Babu said.

The Sherpas on the team collected garbage and bodies from the higher-attitude areas, while the soldiers worked at lower levels and the base camp area for weeks during the popular spring climbing season, when weather conditions are more favourable. Babu said the weather was a big challenge for their work in the South Col area.

Digging out the garbage is also a big task, since it is frozen inside ice and breaking the blocks is not easy. It took two days to dig out one body near the South Col which was frozen in a standing position deep in the ice, he said. *—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

RBI fines 5 banks, including PNB, for non-compliance

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has penalized five banks, including Punjab National Bank (PNB), in the first week of July for non-compliance with various RBI directions. PNB became the fifth bank to be penalized, with a penalty of Rs 1.31 crore. This penalty was imposed for non-compliance with RBI directions regarding 'Loans and Advances: Statutory and Other Restrictions' and the 'Reserve Bank of India (Know Your Customer (KYC) Direction, 2016'. . These banks include The Gujarat Rajya Karmachari Co-operative Bank, Gujarat; The Rohika Central Co-operative Bank, Madhubani, Bihar; The National Co-operative Bank, Mumbai, Maharashtra; and The Bank Employees' Co-operative Bank, West Bengal. *—ANI*

BigBloc's board to consider bonus issue on 19 July

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Leading AAC material manufacturer BigBloc Construction Ltd on Saturday said its board will meet on 19 July to consider a bonus share issue to shareholders. The Surat-based company also said its wholly owned subsidiary StarBigBloc Building Material Ltd is planning to launch an SME IPO or a preferential issue to support its expansion plans. The company reported a net profit of Rs 30.69 crore for the 2023-24 financial year. Revenue from operations rose 21.5 per cent to Rs 243.22 crore in FY24 compared to the previous year. BigBloc Construction's share capital stands at Rs 14.14 crore, while its reserves were at Rs 89.87 crore, the statement said. Company also announced a dividend payout of Rs 0.40 per share. *—PTI*

M3M expects ₹4K cr revenue from home projects

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Realty firm M3M India is expecting a revenue of around Rs 4,000 crore from its new luxury housing project in Gurugram. The company has launched a new residential project 'M3M Altitude' on Golf Course Extension Road in Gurugram where it will build 350 luxury apartments. M3M will invest Rs 1,200 crore to develop this 4-acre project, while the estimated sales revenue is around Rs 4,000 crore. The company is selling apartments in a price range of Rs 10 crore to Rs 30 crore each. In a statement on Saturday, the company said it has already sold about 180 units for Rs 1,875 crore. Gurugram housing market has seen strong housing sales. *—PTI*

Actress Huma to invest in India's Flutrr dating app

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Flutrr, India's first vernacular dating app, proudly announces that acclaimed actress Huma Qureshi has recently invested in the Kolkata-based startup. The app supports 6 Indian languages, enabling young Indians to forge meaningful relationships rooted in shared linguistic, traditional, and cultural interest. Statista's most recent study of the online dating market in India reveals that with the entrance of the Gen Z audience, users are becoming increasingly tech savvy,, as a result of which the traditional arranged marriage structure is constantly evolving. Indian youth are increasingly looking towards autonomy in making important life decisions, such as selecting a partner. They are hence highly likely to use platforms that allow users to find potential partners that match their likes, dislikes & interests. *—PTI*

Gujarat leads with $7.3B FDI, sees 55% rise in FY24

FDI inflow has been increasing consecutively over last 3 years

GANDHINAGAR, 6 JULY

Gujarat received USD 7.3 billion in FY 2023-24, compared to USD 4.7 billion received in 2022-23 *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Gujarat has registered an increase of 55 per cent in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow during financial year 2023-24, as per data released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

According to the DPIIT data released on Friday, Gujarat received USD 7.3 billion in FY 2023-24, compared to USD 4.7 billion received in FY 2022-23. The FDI inflow in the state has been increasing consecutively over the past three years, securing investments of USD 2.7 billion in FY 2022, USD 4.7 billion in FY 2023, and USD 7.3 billion in FY 2024.

"Gujarat has shown consistent growth in attracting FDI for three consecutive financial years by securing investments of USD 2.7 billion in FY2022, USD 4.7 billion in FY2023, and USD 7.3 billion in FY2024," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) Gujarat said in a post on X.

Among the major factors that have played a role in attracting FDI are Gujarat's state-of-the-art industrial infrastructure, industry-friendly policies, and consistent enhancements in ease of doing business.

The government stated that the biennial Vibrant Gujarat Summit, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat, has also played a significant role in bringing new investment to the state.

Notably, the first Vibrant Summit during the Azadi Ka Amrit Kaal was held in January this year.

"Aligned with the #ViksitBharat vision of Hon'ble PM Shri@narendramodi, Gujarat CM Shri @Bhupendrapbjp has ensured that every possible mechanism that facilitates investment and business is in place ranging from state-of-the-art industrial infrastructure to business-friendly government policies.

The biennial Vibrant Gujarat Summits that Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi had first pioneered during his tenure as Gujarat CM has also played a significant role in bringing new investment. Due to the dedicated efforts of 'Team Gujarat', the State is also attracting significant investment in the emerging industries like semiconductor and other promising sectors," the CMO added in its post.

The state has also launched and effectively implemented new sector-specific policies in areas such as renewable energy, semiconductors, and IT in the last three years, which have also created a favorable investment climate in the state. *—ANI*

BREAKTHROUGH FOR INDIA

Nvidia is known for its making of GPUs in the world *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

'Nvidia is interested in AI Mission if there is an opportunity'

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Affirming the company's interest in India's AI Mission, Nvidia's Managing Director (MD) of Asia South, Vishal Dhupar, stated that if there is an opportunity, Nvidia, like any other player, will be interested in India's AI Mission.

In an interaction with ANI, Nvidia's MD of Asia South said, "If you have an opportunity, you will go apply for it."

India's dedicated AI mission is under consideration. Speaking at the inaugural event of the Global India AI Summit 2024 in the national capital, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that the government will roll out the India AI Mission in the next two or three months, during which the government will help domestic companies procure computing power units to run artificial intelligence (AI) systems.

While announcing the India AI Mission, the Union Minister said, "We will procure 10,000 or more graphics processing units (GPUs) under a public-private partnership so that the efficiencies of the industry can be harnessed for a bigger cause."

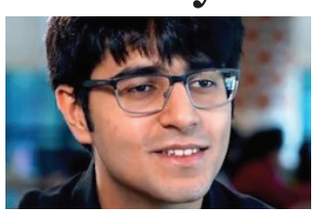
Nvidia has gained a reputation for making some of the best GPUs in the world, ideal for supporting new technologies in the field of AI.

The company has seen huge demand for its chips, driving its market value to USD 3.16 trillion, making it the third most valuable company.

Many Indian companies, such as Reliance Group, Tata Group, and Yotta Infrastructure, have struck deals with Nvidia for its GPUs. *—ANI*

'Zepto can grow to Rs 2.5L cr in 5-10 yrs'

NEW DELHI 6 JULY



Aadit Palicha *PHOTO: WIKITIA*

Quick commerce unicorn Zepto revenue can grow multifold to Rs 2.5 lakh crore in 5-10 years if the company is able to execute the business well, a top company official said on Saturday.

Speaking at 7th JIIF Foundation day, Zepto Co-Founder and CEO Aadit Palicha said grocery and household essentials are the mother of all categories that are sold on leading e-commerce platforms Flipkart and Amazon in India.

He said the grocery and household essentials market was around USD 650 billion in India in FY23 and is growing at 9 per cent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) and is expected to get to about USD 850 billion by FY29.

The company's revenue have grown over fivefold to over Rs 10,000 crore in FY24 from about Rs 2,000 crore in FY23.

Last month, Zepto raised USD 665 million in an investment round that valued the firm at USD 3.6 billion, almost triple of what it was worth a year ago, and is preparing to list soon.

The three-year-old startup raised USD 665 million (about Rs 5,550 crore) from new investors, including New York-based private equity firm Avenir Growth Capital, venture firm Lightspeed, and Avra Capital, a new fund started by former Y Combinator Continuity head Anu Hariharan and Andreessen Horowitz.

Zepto has about 29 per cent market share in 10-minute grocery delivery service (known as quick e-commerce), up from 15 per cent in March 2022. Blinkit is the market leader with nearly 40 per cent and the rest is with Instamart. *—PTI*

FPIs invest Rs 7,962 cr in equity market during first week of July

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

The total investments by FPIs cross Rs 1 lakh crore *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI) have infused Rs 7,962 crore in the Indian equity market in the first week of July, according to the data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL).

The data highlights that the total investment by FPIs in the Indian markets also crossed Rs 1 lakh crore this year and according to NSDL stands at Rs 103,934 crore.

The other emerging markets also received substantial FPI inflows this month. Indonesia received an FPI investment of USD 127 million, Malaysia received USD 81 million, the Philippines received only USD 5 million inflow and South Korea received a record investment of USD 927 million in the first week of July.

However, the equity markets of Thailand and Vietnam witnessed outflows of USD 69 mn and USD 68 mn, respectively.

Earlier in June, the FPIs turned net buyers in Indian markets after two months of selling. In June, FPIs injected a net investment of Rs 26,565 crore into Indian equities, following initial selling earlier in the month after the announcement of election results.

But now, the surge in FPI investments points to the renewed confidence by investors in India's market potential and economic outlook. Now the investors will monitor the upcoming budget by the central government and the markets will react accordingly. *—ANI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

PAYTM FOUNDER LAUDS GOVT'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Vijay Shekhar Sharma, the founder of fintech company Paytm has all praise for the current government for creating a conducive environment for Indian start-ups to launch, grow, and succeed. Speaking at the JITO Incubation and Innovation Foundation (JIIF)'s Innovation Conclave, Sharma highlighted the significant strides made under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

"Under Modi's leadership, now is the opportune moment for startups to launch and thrive. The current environment offers unprecedented opportunities, with the government consistently recognizing and rewarding the entrepreneurial spirit of India's youth. The startup ecosystem is flourishing at an extraordinary pace, placing the country on a robust development roadmap to 2047. Over the past few decades, India has established a strong reputation in IT services and software sectors.

India's startup ecosystem, now the third-largest globally, is realizing the dreams of countless entrepreneurs and introducing innovative business practices. *—ANI*

FIIs in real estate account for 65% investment in India

PHOTO: ANI

NEW DELHI, 6 JULY

Foreign investors have taken the lead in India's real estate sector during the first half of 2024, accounting for 65 per cent of total investments, according to a report by JLL.

The report highlighted that Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) injected around USD 3.1 billion, contributing significantly to the sector's total investment of USD 4.8 billion in the first six months of 2024.

The report noted that the investment in the real estate sector during the first 6 months of the year have already covered around the 81 per cent of total investment in 2023. It highlights the confidence of investors in India amidst global uncertainties and the election season, exemplifying the country's robust economy.

The share of domestic investors dropped to 35 per cent in the first half of 2024 from 37 per cent in 2023. The average share of domestic investors in the last five years is 19 per cent.

Although the growth was not broad-based, it highlights the increasing interest in the warehousing sector and the potential it holds for investments in India.

Noting the outlook for the upcoming half of 2024, the report stated that India's economy continues to exhibit resilience and a positive outlook for the real estate sector, attracting investors interested in the country's growth story.

The private equity investment outlook remains strong, *—ANI*

AI COMPANIES TARGETED

OpenAI data breach is a treasure for hackers

UNITED STATES, 6 JULY

AI companies are the juiciest targets for hackers *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

There's no need to worry that your secret ChatGPT conversations were obtained in a recently reported breach of OpenAI's systems. The hack itself, while troubling, appears to have been superficial — but it's reminder that AI companies have in short order made themselves into one of the juiciest targets out there for hackers.

The New York Times reported the hack in more detail after former OpenAI employee Leopold Aschenbrenner hinted at it recently in a podcast.

No security breach should really be treated as trivial, and eavesdropping on internal OpenAI development talk certainly has its value. But it's far from a hacker getting access to internal systems, models in progress, secret roadmaps, and so on.

But it should scare us anyway, and not necessarily because of the threat of China or other adversaries overtaking us in the AI arms race. The simple fact is that these AI companies have become gatekeepers to a tremendous amount of very valuable data.

It's uncertain what training data exactly they have, because the companies are incredibly secretive about their hoards. But it's a mistake to think that they are just big piles of scraped web data. Yes, they do use web scrapers or datasets like the Pile, but it's a gargantuan task shaping that raw data into something that can be used to train a model like GPT-4o. A huge amount of human work hours are required to do this — it can only be partially automated.

In the case of Google, an uptick in searches for "air conditioners" tells you the market is heating up a bit. But those users don't then have a whole conversation about what they want, how much money they're willing to spend, what their home is like, manufacturers they want to avoid, and so on. You know this is valuable because Google is itself trying to convert its users to provide this very information by substituting AI interactions for searches!

These are industrial secrets, and AI companies are suddenly right at the heart of a great deal of them. The newness of this side of the industry carries with it a special risk in that AI processes are simply not yet standardized or fully understood.

There's no reason to panic — companies with access to lots of personal or commercially valuable data have faced and managed similar risks for years. But AI companies represent a newer, younger, and potentially juicier target than your garden-variety poorly configured enterprise server or irresponsible data broker. Even a hack like the one reported above, with no serious exfiltrations that we know of, should worry anybody who does business with AI companies. They've painted the targets on their backs. Don't be surprised when anyone, or everyone, takes a shot.-

—Tech Crunch

META UNVEILS INNOVATIVE DATA CENTER DESIGN, FOR AI-FUTURE

CALIFORNIA, 6 JULY

Meta truly believes in innovation and creativity. It built technologies that revolutionized how people connect with each other or how communities form, and businesses grow. Apps such as; Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp further empowered billions around the world. This time Meta announced a groundbreaking new design for its data centers to optimize the capabilities of artificial intelligence (AI). Such revamping is to revolutionize the data center operations and connect it to Meta's planned shift to liquid cooling process. This strategic shift in data center design can significantly enhance the efficiency, sustainability, and capability to efficiently manage the increasing demands of AI-based workloads.

The future of Meta's new data center looks bright with innovative design, cutting-edge technologies, and architectural advancements. It can be easily customized as per the requirement to accommodate and enhance the overall experience of the applications. By leveraging advanced cooling technologies and renewable energy sources, the new design reduces energy consumption by 40 per cent, aligning with Meta's commitment to sustainability and its goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions. This will further support any AI-based research and product development in the future. *—PTI*

EUFA EURO 224

Ronaldo's 'last C'ship' ends without a goal

France beat Portugal 5-3 on penalties

HAMBURG, 6 JULY

The 39-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo has said this was his record sixth and last European Championship. France beat Portugal 5-3 in a penalty shootout to reach the European Championship semifinals on Friday, ending Ronaldo's bid to win the title in his last appearance at the tournament.

But this time, they weren't Ronaldo's tears. Instead, the Portugal superstar's role was to console a weeping teammate after a painful exit from their last European Championship — and, who knows, potentially their final major international tournament.

Pepe, a defender still excelling for his country at the remarkable age of 41, was dejected as he sobbed on the shoulder of Ronaldo in a embrace lasting about 15 seconds following Portugal's penalty-shootout loss to France in the quarterfinals in Hamburg on Friday.

Ronaldo cried himself at Euro 2024 — after having a penalty saved during extra time of the last-16 match against Slovenia just four days ago.

Ronaldo will be 41 when the next major tournament rolls around — the 2026 World Cup, jointly held by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

After the game finished 0-0 following extra time, Joao Felix hit a post with a penalty in the shootout and Theo Hernández converted the clinching kick. France lost in penalty shootouts at its last two major tournaments — in the last 16 at the Euros in 2021 and in the 2022 World Cup final.

France will play Spain in the semifinals after its extra-time win over Germany in Stuttgart.

Ronaldo finishes his European Championship career on a record 14 goals. That's five more than his nearest rival, Michel Platini, who scored all of his at one tournament — Euro 1984 — including two hat tricks.

—*AP*

France players celebrate after winning the match against Portugal; Ronaldo condoles Pepe **PHOTO: X/@EQUIPEDEFRANCE**

France beat Portugal 5-3 in a penalty shootout to reach the semifinals, ending Ronaldo's bid to win the title in his last appearance at the tournament. Ronaldo who was playing his record sixth Euros confirmed that this Championship will be last of his career

Merino's goal sends Spain to semifinals

Spain stopped Germany for the first time in 10 attempts

STUTTGART, 6 JULY

Spain and its fans celebrated as if they'd won the European Championship. After eliminating tournament host Germany in a thrilling quarterfinal, Luis de la Fuente's team has a great chance to lift the trophy in Berlin next week.

Spain snatched a 2-1 win in extra time on Friday thanks to substitute Mikel Merino's header in the 119th minute. Merino celebrated by running around the corner flag, mimicking his father Miguel Merino's celebration after he scored in the same stadium for Osasuna in the UEFA Cup against Stuttgart in 1991.

Extra time came only after Florian Wirtz's equalizer in the last minute of regulation.

Dani Olmo, who set up Merino's winner, netted the opener early in the second half. All three goals came from substitutes.

Spain defender Dani Carvajal was sent off late in extra time for a second yellow card and will be suspended from Tuesday's semifinal against France. Fellow defender Robin le Normand will also miss that match after picking up another booking.

Germany players were morose and coach Julian Nagelsmann looked on with his hands on hips and his face etched with disappointment.

"We were so close, that's what makes it so bitter," Germany midfielder Toni Kroos said after the final match of his excellent career.

The 2014 World Cup winner had said he was retiring when Germany's campaign ended.

—*AP*

Spain players celebrate after winning the match against Germany in Germany on Saturday **PHOTO: X/@SEFUTBOL**

Kroos leaves the stage of world soccer

Lisa Nandy, the Indian-origin member of Parliament re-elected from Wigan in north-west England, will assume her position at Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Cabinet table on Saturday as his new Culture Secretary alongside a record number of fellow women ministers. The 44-year-old MP was appointed Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport among 11 women picked for top jobs by Starmer as he got straight to work after a landslide Labour general election win on Friday. —*PTI*

COPA AMERICA

CANADA BEAT VENEZUELA TO REACH SEMIFINAL

ARLINGTON, 6 JULY

Canada hasn't scored much on the way to the semifinals of its first Copa America. Don't look for apologies from American-born coach Jesse Marsch.

Ismaël Koné scored in the sixth round of the shootout right after a third save by Maxime Crépeau and Canada moved on with a victory over Venezuela on Friday night. The Canadians won 4-3 on penalty kicks following a 1-1 draw in the quarterfinals, keeping Venezuela from advancing to the Copa America semi-finals for the first time since 2011.

Just the fourth team to advance out of group play by scoring just one goal, Canada is moving on again following a 0-0 draw against Chile that sent it to the elimination round. "People will talk about should we score more goals or whatever," Marsch said.

"We should score more goals. But those are two pretty strong performances against very good opponents." Jacob Shaffelburg scored in the 13th minute for Canada before Salomón Rondón got the equalizer in the 64th minute for Venezuela. "I heard some of the guys saying afterward I should have had him shoot earlier because he's got ice in his veins," Marsch said. Jon Aramburu sent a long pass from his penalty box, leaving just Rondón and Moïse Bombito battling for the loose ball near midfield. —*AP*

Dhruv Sitwala clinches Asian Billiards C'ship title

RIYADH, 6 JULY

Ace Indian cueist Pankaj Advani fell short in his quest to secure a hat-trick of titles, losing 2-5 to compatriot Dhruv Sitwala in the final of the 2024 Asian Billiards Championship here on Saturday. Dhruv set the tone for the match with an impressive start, scoring 103 points, while Advani struggled to get on the board, finishing with no points. Advani managed to improve his game, scoring 36 points, but Dhruv maintained his dominance with another 100. Advani found his rhythm in the third frame and outplayed Dhruv, achieving a remarkable 101. Dhruv, however, had an off-frame, scoring only two points. Advani continued his momentum and scored a perfect 100, while Dhruv managed only 11 points. Dhruv's consistency shone through as he scored 100 again. —*PTI*

Rajawat stuns world No. 4 Anders Antonsen

CALGARY, 6 JULY

Continuing his dream run, rising Indian shuttler Priyanshu Rajawat stunned top seed and world number four Anders Antonsen of Denmark to cruise into the semifinals of the Canada Open here. World number 39 Rajawat defeated Antonsen 21-11, 17-21, 21-19 in a gruelling one hour 19 minutes quarterfinal on Friday night. However, the women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand made a quarter-final exit. The third-seeded Indians were handed a 18-21 21-19 16-21 defeat by Chinese Taipei's Pei Shan Hsieh and En-Tzu Hung. —*PTI*

West Ham sign Max Kilman on 7-year deal from Wolves

LONDON, 6 JULY

Premier League outfit West Ham United announced the signing of defender Maximilian Kilman from Wolverhampton Wanderers on Saturday. Kilman became the third signing for the Hammers and will play under their new head coach, Julen Lopetegui. He worked under the Spaniard during his time with the Wolves at Molineux. West Ham released an official statement to announce that the 27-year-old defender had signed a seven-year contract with the club. "West Ham United is delighted to announce the signing of Wolverhampton Wanderers central defender Maximilian Kilman. —*ANI*

Dravid's coaching stint came to an end with India winning the T20 World Cup in Barbados last week **PHOTO: X/@BCCI**

Helped captain deliver his vision, says Rahul Dravid

MUMBAI, 6 JULY

As Rahul Dravid bids farewell to Team India, the legend said that during his tenure as head coach, he abhorred chopping and changing the side too much and always tried to be a foil for skipper Rohit Sharma so that he could devise his own winning strategies.

Dravid's coaching stint came to an end with India winning the T20 World Cup in Barbados last week, defeating South Africa and bringing home the trophy for the second time after 2007.

"I'm someone who actually likes continuity and don't like to chop and change too many things because I believe that creates a lot of instability and doesn't create very good environment," said Dravid in a video posted by BCCI on Saturday.

Under Dravid's tutelage, India thrashed England in the five-match Test series at home and the team also reached the 2023 ODI World Cup final.

"I've really enjoyed working with Rohit, someone I knew as a young boy. Just to see him grow as a person and grow as a leader in Indian cricket, what someone like him has been able to contribute to the team over the last 10-12 years, both as a player and now as a leader, has been a real tribute to him and the effort that he's put in," he said.

Dravid said he always believed in the process because of which, at times, he was misunderstood as not being result-oriented.

"For me that's (results), of course it's important. I keep saying and people think, 'Oh, I think results are not important'. Of course, results are important. —*PTI*

I'm someone who actually likes continuity and don't like to chop and change too many things because I believe that creates a lot of instability and doesn't create very good environment

-Rahul Dravid, ex-India Coach

1st T20I: Zimbabwe stun young India by 13 runs

HARARE, 6 JULY

An inexperienced yet spirited Zimbabwe pulled off an upset of massive proportions when they stunned an Indian team brimming with an array of Next-Generation stars by 13 runs in the first T20I of the five-match series here on Saturday.

India, who were recently crowned champions in the T20 World Cup albeit with a different set of players, were expected to trot past an unfancied Zimbabwe and the script followed that line when the hosts were restricted to 115 for nine.

But from there, Zimbabwe wrote their own narrative, reducing India to 28 for four in the Power Play and then eventually bowled them out for 102 in 19.5 overs.

Pacer Tendai Chatara (3/16) and skipper Sikandar Raza (3/25) led the home side bowling with aplomb.

It was India's first defeat in T20Is in 2024 and first against Zimbabwe in eight years.

India's stutter began in the first over itself, losing Abhishek Sharma, one of three T20I debutants along with Riyan Parag and Dhruv Jurel, for duck.

However, skipper Shubman Gill kept India in the chase with a sensible knock (31, 5x4), but Sikandar Raza accounted for his counterpart with a delivery that skidded past his bat to rattle the stumps.

—*PTI*

Zverev overcomes knee issue to beat Norrie

LONDON, 6 JULY

Alexander Zverev overcame a knee problem, a marathon tiebreaker and nerves from seeing one of his sporting idols in the Royal Box in order to book a spot in Wimbledon's fourth round.

Zverev beat Cameron Norrie — the last British man in the tournament — 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (15) on Saturday after converting his sixth match point in the tiebreaker on Centre Court.

He'd needed treatment several times on his left knee following a tumble in the second set. He was also a bit starstruck from seeing Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, one of several major sporting figures in the Royal Box. Zverev is a massive fan of Bayern Munich, the German club that Guardiola coached from 2013-16.

"When I saw Pep I got so nervous for a few games there," Zverev told the crowd after the win, before launching a personal appeal to Guardiola. "Bayern Munich needs a coach, man. And if you're tired of football, you can coach me on the tennis court anytime."

Ben Shelton also reached the fourth round after the 14th-seeded American came through a third straight five-setter, beating Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (4), 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 on No. 1 Court in a match that had been suspended overnight in the first set because of rain. —*AP*

Alexander Zverev from Germany celebrates after winning the match against C Norrie in London on Saturday **PHOTO: X/@ATPTOUR**

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar received a standing ovation from the capacity crowd at Centre Court when he took some time off to enjoy an afternoon at the Wimbledon on Saturday. Dressed in a beige-coloured suit, Tendulkar, with a smile on his face, could be seen waving his hands in acknowledgement after the crowd at the Centre Court gave him a rousing welcome. It was a cricketers' day out at the Centre Court as England's Test and white-ball captains Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler, former skipper Joe Root were also present among the attendees in the Royal Box'; The legendary football manager, Pep Guardiola who led Manchester City to a record-breaking fourth successive Premier League title last season watching the match from the box; Wimbledon King Roger Federer watch a third-round clash between Shelton and Shapovalov, which opened play on Court 1 **PHOTO:**X/@**WIMBLEDON**

Bhambri-Olivetti pair ousted from Wimbledon

London, 6 July

India's Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti made a second-round exit from the Wimbledon Championships after losing to Germany's Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz in three sets here. The Indo-French pair squandered a one-game lead to go down 6-4 4-6 3-6 to the eighth seed Germans in two hours, five minutes on Friday. Bhambri and Olivetti had downed the Kazakh duo of Alexander Bublik and Alexander Shevchenko in the opening round. On Saturday, veteran Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Mathew Ebden will be in action. The second seeds, who are the reigning Australian Open champions, will face Germany's Hendrik Jebens and Constantin Frantzen in the second round. —*PTI*

Vinesh Phogat storms into 50 Kg Grand Prix of Spain final

MADRID, 6 JULY

Paris Olympic-bound top Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Saturday reached the final of the women's 50kg category in the Grand Prix of Spain here. Vinesh, who received her Schengen visa at the last minute on Wednesday, won three bouts without much difficulty to storm into the final.

In the final slated later in the day, Vinesh will meet Mariia Tiumerekova, a former Russian wrestler who is now competing as an Individual Neutral Athlete.

The 29-year-old World Championships medallist first beat Yusneylis Guzman of Cuba 12-4 on points. She then registered a win by fall against Madison Parks of Canada, a silver medallist at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, in the quarterfinals. In the semifinals, Vinesh beat another Canadian Katie Dutchak 9-4 on points.

After her training-cum-competition stint in Spain, Vinesh will travel to France for a 20-day training stint in preparation for the Paris Olympics. —*PTI*

Vinesh Phogat **PHOTO: X/@Phogat**

INDIAN HOCKEY

Forget occasion, play the game: Coach to team

BENGALURU, 6 JULY

Head coach Craig Fulton is well aware of the expectations from the Indian men's hockey team in the upcoming Paris Olympics and his mantra to his players is to play the game and not bother the occasion.

"I agree that the expectations are higher after Tokyo bronze but the bottom line is that the team has been progressing well. They are in the top eight and from 12th in London (2012) to 8th in Rio (2016) to bronze in Tokyo (2020). It was a big jump and now we are preparing for Paris," the South African coach told PTI. He said he's a "process driven" coach and all focus now is on the first game of the Paris Olympics against New Zealand. He did not get a full four-year cycle for the preparation of the team but has no complaints.

He believes in players who are ready to take a bullet for his teammates and his team bonding methods have yielded good results too. He took the team to South Africa where the players did mountain hiking, surfing, barbeque at the beach, etc. India is placed at seventh position in the latest rankings. He feels mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton, who has the experience of working with top cricketers, has an important role to play.

His focus has been on creating a good defensive structure because that is the area where teams often make mistakes.

On India getting a 'Pool of Death' with Australia, Argentina and Belgium in the same group, the coach said, "We have to win five games to be in the top four. First game against New Zealand is very important." —*PTI*

Head coach Craig Fulton **PHOTO: PTI**